
DISCOURSES

32.28114
SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

In Two Volumes.

7

DISCOURSES



SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

In Two Volumes.

DISCOURSES
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY *SAMUEL SEABURY*, D. D.
BISHOP OF CONNECTICUT AND RHODE-ISLAND.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:
PRINTED BY T. AND J. SWORDS,
FOR
J. RIVINGTON, BOOKSELLER, No. 1, QUEEN-STREET.

—1793.—

SEVERAL SUBJECTS



2025 RELEASE UNDER E.O. 14176



1000

[illegible][illegible]

1. ALPHABETIC, BOOKSHELF, NO. 1, CIVIL SERVICE

CONTENTS

TO THE

EPISCOPAL CLERGY

OF

CONNECTICUT and RHODE-ISLAND,

These two Volumes of DISCOURSES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF THE REGARD AND ESTEEM OF THEIR

AFFECTIONATE DIOCESAN,

SAMUEL SEABURY.

TO THE

EPISCOPAL CLERGY



CONVECTICION DE-IRLAND,

These two Volumes of DISCOURSES

ARE RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

IN TOKEN OF THE REGARD AND ESTEEM OF THEIR

AFFECTIONATE DISCIPLES,

SAMUEL SEABURY.

DISCOURSE III.

CONTENTS

VOLUME I.

DISCOURSE I.

PART I.

The Authority of Christ's Ministers.

PAGE.

- 1 COR. IV. 1, 2. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.* — — — — — 1—17

PART II.

The Duty of Christ's Ministers. 18—34

PART III.

The Duty of the People towards the Ministers of Christ. 35—50

DISCOURSE II.

PART I.

The Apostolical Commission.

- JOHN XX. 21, 22, 23. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.* 51—71

PART II.

The same Subject continued.

72—95

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE III.

Of Baptism.

PAGE.

MATT. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* 96—117

DISCOURSE IV.

Of Infant Baptism.

MARK X. 13, 14, 15, 16. *They brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.* — — — 119—139

DISCOURSE V.

Of Confirmation, or laying on of Hands.

HEB. vi. 2. — *And of laying on of hands.* 141—161

DISCOURSE VI.

Of the Holy Eucharist.

LUKE xxii. 19. — *This do in remembrance of me.* 163—184

DISCOURSE VII.

Observations on the History of the Sabbath.

GEN. ii. 2, 3. *And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made: And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.* — — — 185—206

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

Of Christian Unity.

PAGE.

EPHES. vi. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.* — — — 207—220

DISCOURSE IX.

The Descent of Christ into Hell.

ACTS ii. 25, 26, 27. *For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption.* — — — 221—229

DISCOURSE X.

PART I.

Observations on the Creation of Adam.

GEN. ii. 7. *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* — 231—239

PART II.

The same Subject continued.

241—254

DISCOURSE XI.

PART I.

Observations on the History of Cain and Abel.

GEN. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.* — — — 255—268

PART

PART H.

The same Subject continued.

PAGE.

269—278

DISCOURSE XII.

Observations on the Wickedness and Destruction of the
Old World:

GEN. vi. 3. — *My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.* — — 279—291

DISCOURSE XIII.

PART I.

The fatal Effects of obstinate Unbelief and Impenitency.

LUKE xi. 24, 25, 26. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: And the last state of that man is worse than the first.* — — 293—303

PART II.

The same Subject continued.

305—315

DISCOURSE XIV.

The Parable of the Talents.

MATT. xxv. 29. *To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.* 317—332

DISCOURSE XV.

The general Judgment.

MATT. xxv. 31, 32. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.* — — — 333—344

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE I.

PART I.

THE AUTHORITY OF CHRIST'S MINISTERS.

1 COR. iv. 1, 2. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.*

UPON reading this epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, it will be evident that it was written to correct several errors in doctrine and discipline, which, after his departure, had risen in that church. It appears that the doctrine of the resurrection was disbelieved by some, doubted by others, and generally misunderstood: that disputes and divisions had sprung up among them concerning the eating of flesh which had been first offered to idols, and then exposed to sale in the shambles—the propriety of womens' teaching in the public congregations—the administration of the holy communion, and the conduct of their love-feasts—the variety and pre-eminency of spiritual gifts in the exercise of the christian ministry; and concerning the superior excellency of some of the preachers of the gospel above others, which they estimated by their personal appearance, by their spiritual attainments, either real or assumed, by the popular arts of preaching, and by the number of their converts and adherents.

VOL. I.

B

The

2

— The ill conduct of those teachers who were left by St. Paul at Corinth, or came there after his departure, seems to have been the occasion of all their confusion and error. Not content with preaching the gospel with humility and simplicity of heart, they suffered the love of fame, or the lust of covetousness, to pervert their minds, and influence their conduct. They boasted of their own abilities and gifts in praying and preaching—of their great labours in spreading the gospel—and of the numbers they had converted and baptised; all of whom they claimed to themselves, as their disciples. Hereby sects and parties were formed: some retaining a reverence for their old apostle, by whom they had been brought to the knowledge of the christian faith, declared themselves of the party of Paul: others claimed Apollos for their apostle and head; others Cephas; and others those by whom they had been converted and baptised.

To this undue preference of one minister above all others, and the consequent parties and animosities, the text has a particular reference. With mild reprehension, and well tempered zeal, the holy apostle attacks this pernicious source of discord and schism. He shews that as Christ is one and undivided,* so the gospel is one and not a various system: that however numerous the preachers of this gospel may be, their office, as preachers, is one, their duty one; and that their conduct ought to be the same—to preach Christ, not themselves—his gospel, not their own inventions—to convert men to him, not to their own party—to baptise in his name, and thereby admit men into his church, not into their own sect—to consider all the abilities, and gifts, and graces they possessed, as being conferred on them, not for their own aggrandizement, but

* 1 Corinthians, chap. i. and chap. iii.

but for the enlargement of the kingdom, and edification of the body of Christ; and their success in gaining converts, not as the effect of their own abilities, but as an increase given of God. For "who (said the holy apostle) is Paul, and who is Apollos; but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I planted, and Apollos watered; but God gave the increase."* "Therefore let no man glory in men"—Let no man pride himself in having been baptised by this or the other eminent preacher—"for all things are yours: whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come; all are yours," and, in the hand of your heavenly Father, are made to contribute to your spiritual interest. "And ye are" not the disciples of any particular apostle, but "Christ's; and Christ is" not the property of any particular preacher, to be disposed of as he shall please, but "God's," and his redemption the gift of God. Therefore, "let a man so account of us"—of me Paul, of Apollos, of Cephas, and of all the apostles and preachers of the gospel, not as heads of parties and leaders of sects, ambitious of either fame or gain, but, "as of the ministers of Christ"—all appointed by him, and united in preaching him and his gospel—"and stewards of the mysteries of God"—to make known to the world the mystery hidden from ages, redemption from death, remission of sins, and eternal life in a future state, through Christ crucified; and to dispense the doctrines, discipline, and sacraments of his religion, according as God shall give us ability and opportunity. "Moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."—Let all, therefore, who are called to the exercise of this ministry; all, to whom this stewardship is committed, remember,

* 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6.

† Verse 21, 22, 23.

remember, that it "is required" of them to "be faithful;" that they seek not their own glory, but the honour of Christ; not to fulfil their own will, but the will of him who hath called and sent them.

This, I take it, is the true meaning of the text as it stands connected with the apostle's discourse before and after it—and thus understood it presents two things to our consideration:

I. The light in which the apostle demands that both he, and all the other preachers of the gospel, should be considered, viz. "as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God."

II. The acknowledgment of their obligation to fidelity, in the discharge of the trust committed to them—"it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

The first of these divisions is to be the subject of this discourse, in which I shall shew in what respects the apostles were, and all duly authorized clergymen now are,

1. Ministers of Christ; and,
 2. Stewards of the mysteries of God.
1. I am to shew, in what respects the apostles were, and all duly authorized clergymen now are "ministers of Christ;" and,

1. The authority under which the apostles acted being derived from Christ, in the exercise of it, they were *his ministers*, because the authority was originally and properly his, and they could act only in his name: and this authority being, by successive ordinations, continued down to this day, all duly authorized clergymen now act by it, and are therefore "the ministers of Christ."

The commission given by our Saviour to his apostles, just before his ascension, as it is recorded by St. Matthew, is in these words:—"All power is given

given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway even unto the end of the world. Amen."*—Which may be expressed in the following manner—'In virtue of that supreme power which is committed unto me in heaven and in earth, I commission and send you to preach my gospel to all the nations of the world, and to make disciples of all who shall embrace it, by baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: instructing them *in all the doctrines, and teaching them to observe all the laws*, of that holy religion, the propagation of which I now commit to you: and behold, in the execution of this commission I will, by my spirit and power, be present with you and your successors, even unto the consummation of all things.'

On this commission is the authority of ministers in Christ's church founded; and no man can justly claim any power in spiritual matters but as it is derived from it. No one will now pretend to have received his commission to preach the gospel immediately from Christ, as the eleven apostles had theirs; and none, but enthusiasts, will pretend to be empowered for that work by immediate revelation from heaven, as St. Paul was. It remains, then, that there is no other way left to obtain a valid commission to act as Christ's minister, in his church, but by an uninterrupted succession of ordinations from the apostles:—Where this is wanting, all spiritual power in Christ's church is wanting also: while they who have any part of this original commission communicated to them, are properly Christ's ministers,

* Matthew xxviii. 18, 19, 20.

ministers, because they act in his name, and by authority derived from him.

2. All duly authorized clergymen are "the ministers of Christ," as they are the appointed rulers and governors of his church, under him the supreme and all powerful head.

One branch of that fulness of power, which was given to Christ in heaven and earth, was to be the head of the church, which is styled his body. This implies the power of instituting its government, enacting its laws, and appointing its governors to preside over it, and regulate its œconomy, during his absence. That *he* did exercise this power, and did delegate it to his apostles and their successors, just before his ascension into heaven, is plain from the words of the commission he gave them, which have just now been recited to you. If "*all* power in heaven and earth" was "given" to him, certainly the power of appointing the rulers and settling the government of his church was given. If he was to be with his apostles "even unto the end of the world," their successors must have been included in the promise; for the apostles continued not beyond the ordinary term of human life.

In St. John's gospel, the commission of Christ to his apostles is thus introduced—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."* As, therefore, He, under the power of the Father, sent his apostles to be the governors of his church; so he gave them power, under him, to send others with the same power of governing and sending, in order to perpetuate the succession of apostolic powers to the end of the world.

It would be tedious to quote particular texts to prove, that the apostles did exercise this power in the church. The whole tenor of the history of their acts,

* John xx. 21.

acts, and their epistles, clearly shew, that they did institute a plan of church government, enact laws, appoint governors and officers to regulate the œconomy of the church as a society, as well as to preach the doctrines of the gospel. And, from ecclesiastical history, it appears, that the government and officers instituted by them do continue, in their successors, at this present time, notwithstanding the utmost force of persecution which the malice of evil men, and wicked spirits could bring upon it. Though in some places veiled in poverty and obscurity, in others encumbered with worldly pomp and ceremonious superstition, the church of Christ still continues in the world, preserved by his providence, who promised that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it:” and, we trust, preserved to rise again with splendour, and to shine forth, delivered from the shackles of worldly power and systematic superstition, in the full lustre of the beauty of holiness, both in its public offices, and in the faith and piety of its members.

3. All duly authorized clergymen are “ministers of Christ,” as they are his ambassadors to the world, empowered to declare the terms of reconciliation with God—to persuade men to accept and comply with them, that they may obtain the full benefit of them.

This is directly affirmed by St. Paul, who says, “all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation: to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead,

* Matthew xvi. 18.

stead, be ye reconciled to God.”* Indeed, the commission our Saviour gave his apostles fully asserts this power. They were commanded to go and preach the gospel to men of all nations without exception; to receive those who embraced it into the church by baptism; to instruct them in all christian doctrines, and to teach them to do all that Christ had commanded. Directions were also given them how to conduct themselves in the discharge of the work assigned them, and the Holy Spirit was promised to them, to direct them in their ministry, and enable them to accomplish it with full effect.

4. Clergymen are “the ministers of Christ,” as they are, in his name, intercessors with God for his people.

Though this is not directly asserted by our Saviour in his commission to the apostles, yet the very nature of their office implies it: And that it was always understood to do so, appears from their having ever been the conductors of the public worship in christian assemblies—presiding in them, directing what things they should pray for, presenting their petitions at the throne of grace, and interceding with God in their behalf, that he would hear the prayers of his church, forgive the iniquity of his people, grant them peace in this world, and everlasting life in the world to come, through Jesus Christ.

That this office of intercession belonged to the priesthood of Aaron, under the Mosaic dispensation, is evident from many passages of holy scripture: I shall mention only one. The prophet Joel prescribes a set form of intercession to be used by the priests, on a day of solemn humiliation and fasting:—“Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord,

* 2 Cor. v. 18, 19, 20.

Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, *Spare thy people, O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach.*”* And the author of the text has, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, taught us, that “the ministers of Christ” have, under their great High-priest, a far more excellent priesthood than that of Aaron.† They have, therefore, a better right of intercession; and a firmer ground of hope towards God, that their intercession shall prevail, seeing it is made in his name, and through his merit, who offered himself a sacrifice for sin; and who, being now exalted to “the right hand of the throne of God,”‡ “ever liveth to make intercession for” his church,§ and to present her prayers and praises to God, as the sweet odour of incense.¶ “We have an altar,” said St. Paul, “whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle.”¶ Now an altar implies *sacrifice*, and sacrifice a *priesthood*, and a *priesthood* *intercession*.

In these respects, all duly authorised Clergymen are to be accounted of, “as the ministers of Christ,”—as they act under authority derived from him—as they are the appointed rulers and governors of his church, under him the supreme head—as they are his ambassadors to the world, empowered to declare and explain the terms of reconciliation with God, and to persuade men to accept and comply with them—and as they are, in Christ’s name, intercessors with God for his people. I come now to consider them,

2. As stewards of the mysteries of God. And,

1. They are so, as they are dispensers of the word, that is, preachers of the “great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh,”** which vir-

VOL. I.

C

tually

* Ch. ii. ver. 17.

† Ch. vii.

‡ Heb. xii. 2.

¶ Heb. vii. 25.

§ Rev. viii. 3, 4.

¶ Heb. xiii. 10.

** 1 Tim. iii. 16.

tually contains in it all the mysteries or sublime truths of christianity.

The word *mystery* is, I know, particularly obnoxious to a number of men, who, under the affected stile of Free-thinkers, would persuade the world that they think more *justly* and *clearly*, as well as more *freely*, than other people;—that, having divested themselves of all prejudices and prepossessions, their minds are more *candid* and *liberal*; and that, as they are determined to regulate their opinions solely by *reason*, they discard all *mystery* from their system, and will believe nothing which they do not fully comprehend. When these men have explained all the mysteries of *this* world, whose objects are subject to their senses, it may be well enough to hear their harangues upon religion, and the things of the *next* world. When they shall fully comprehend the mysteries of their own nature, and unfold to our apprehension the operations of their own minds—how they think, and will, and reason, they may justly claim our attention to their discourses on the nature and operations of the Deity; and may claim some right to our confidence, when they tell us what God can, and cannot do—how he must, and must not act. But while the whole world is full of mysteries which *they* can no more comprehend than *we* can—while they cannot account for their own senses, how they hear, or see, or taste, or smell, or feel—nor explain the nature of a fly—nor tell how they themselves move a finger—shall their arrogant pretences fright us from the belief or avowal of the doctrines of our holy religion, founded on the revelation and authority of God? Let us rather leave these men of wondrous wisdom to the enjoyment of their own vanity, and remember, that the works, and nature, and revelations of an infinite God, must appear full of mysteries, when contemplated by beings

ings of such limited understandings as we are. To return;—

The mysteries, or sublime truths of christianity, I said, were committed to the ministers of the church as *stewards*, to be by them dispensed or preached to the people. The principal of these truths are, the trinity of the God-head, the incarnation of the Son of God, the atonement and forgiveness of sins by the death of Christ, the operations of the Holy Spirit, particularly his inspirations upon the hearts of men, the virtue and efficacy of faith, the resurrection of the body from death, the general judgement of the last day, and the life everlasting in heaven. That these are to be the general subjects of their preaching, the tenor of the New Testament declares; and their authority to do so is derived from that clause of our Lord's commission to his apostles, which directs them to make disciples, or converts to his religion, of all nations. The belief of these doctrines is included in the very idea of a disciple of Christ: and though his ministers may not be able to explain them all, so as to bring them to the level of human understandings, yet they can shew that they are doctrines of Christianity—they can point out the authority on which they are to be received, the evidences of that authority, their necessity in the christian system, and the influence they are calculated to have on the religious conduct of its professors. When this is properly done, these points become reasonable articles of our belief, and we receive as much benefit from them, as we should do, did we minutely comprehend them.

Another branch of the duty of clergymen as dispensers of the word of God is, their instructing the people in their duty, or their "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded." The end of faith is practice. The end of christian

christian principles is to produce a christian life. This is, therefore, a great part of the steward's office. They are intrusted with the knowledge of Christ's commands; and the interpretation of their meaning, the defining their extent, the shewing their reason and usefulness, and the enforcing their observance by proper motives, are all committed to them. So is also the interpretation of scripture, the explanation and application of the promises and threatenings of God, the confirmation of truth, and the refutation of error. Their office, in short, as preachers or dispensers of the word, takes in all the revelations and dispensations of God to man, all the articles of christian faith, all the points of christian doctrine, and all the particulars of christian practice.

2. Clergymen are stewards of the mysteries of God, as they are dispensers of the holy sacraments of God, and, in a limited sense, of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and of the divine blessing.

To admit men into the church by Baptism has been shewn to be part of the commission given by our Lord to his apostles, a little before he was taken from them into heaven. The power of administering the other sacrament—the sacrifice of the Eucharist—was given to them at its institution, a little before his crucifixion, when having blessed the bread and the cup, and dividing them among the apostles, he said—“ This do in remembrance of me.”* That is; as I have now taken bread and the cup, and blessed and divided them among you, as the representatives of my body *now* offered to God, and ready to be broken, and of my blood *now* offered up, and ready to be poured out for the redemption of the world; so do ye in my church take bread and the cup, and bless them, and distribute them to my faithful

* Luke xxii. 19.

faithful servants, for a memorial of what I now do, (offering myself to God a willing victim for the sins of the world), and of those sufferings I shall speedily endure; and also as pledges of my love to you and to all mankind, and of all the benefits to be obtained through my redemption. In the power of this command, and under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost, the apostles and first christians continued daily to worship and praise God in the temple, and to *break bread*, that is, administer the holy communion "from house to house," or rather *in the house*, probably the house where they assembled for christian worship, which could not be celebrated in the temple.* St. Paul also, in his first Epistle to the Corinthians,† recites the words of institution from our Saviour, and gives directions for the decent celebration of the communion, in such manner as declares the perpetuity of the ordinance, and the authority of Christ's ministers to celebrate it. Upon comparing all circumstances together, it does not appear how any other person can validly administer either of the christian sacraments. The power of administration depending so directly upon the commission of Christ to his apostles, he, who holds no part of it by an uninterrupted succession of ordinations, can have no pretence to meddle with them.

The latter of the two sacraments—the holy Eucharist—was, by the primitive christians, stiled the *sacred mysteries*. It is probable, that the phrase came from the apostles, and that St. Paul alluded particularly to it, when he called the "ministers of Christ," "*stewards of the mysteries of God.*" Should it be asked why the Eucharist was called the *sacred mysteries*? I answer, It was on account of the great mystery contained in it. For that is properly a mystery which exhibits one thing to the senses, and,

by

* Acts xi. 42, 46.

† Ch. xi. ver. 23, &c.

by that, another thing spiritually to the mind. To the outward senses, in the holy Eucharist, are exhibited the bread and the wine, the representative body and blood of Christ: But to the mind, under the emblems of bread and wine, are exhibited, his life-giving body and blood, and all the blessings of his passion and death.* This mystery was signified by our Saviour, at the institution of the holy solemnity, when, taking the bread into his immaculate hands, he gave thanks and blessed it, and gave it to his apostles, saying, "*Take eat, this is my body.*"†

Upon this text the Church of Rome grounds the doctrine of transubstantiation. The Protestants understand the words figuratively—the bread to be the emblem, symbol, or representative, of his body. But both suppose that the body of Christ is (the Romanist *literally by all*; the Church of England, *verily and indeed*, in power and effect, by the faithful,) taken and received in the Lord's supper.

I said also, that clergymen were "stewards of the mysteries of God," because they were, in a limited sense, dispensers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and of the blessing of God.

The power of blessing the people, in the name of God, is part of the priest's office. Aaron and his sons were, under the law, commanded to do it, and a set form of blessing was prescribed to them. Melchisedec blessed Abram, "and he was the priest of the most high God."‡

It has been observed that the Christian Church has a priesthood superior to that of Aaron, because it has an altar of which the priests of Aaron's order have no right to eat.¶ And St. Paul observes that as the priesthood of Christ is superior to that of Aaron, so it is after the order of Melchisedec;§ and,
of

* See John vi. 48, &c. † Luke xxii. 19. ‡ Gen. xiv. 18.
¶ Heb. xiii. 10. § Heb. vii. 17.

of course, the right of blessing, which Melchisedec exercised, must belong to it. It is also to be observed, that Melchisedec and Christ, being of the same order of priesthood, both offered the same Eucharistic sacrifice—bread and wine—and in that sacrifice conveyed their sacerdotal blessing.

In confirmation of the right of Christ's ministers to bless in his name, let it be remembered, that there are several instances of the actual exercise of this right upon record in the New Testament—not in the precatory, but in the positive authoritative style: That, for instance, of St. Paul, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen."*

That clergymen are also, in a qualified sense, dispensers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, will not be doubted by those, who allow that those gifts and graces do accompany the institutions of God, when duly observed. Nor will this be doubted, if it be considered, that God's institutions are not mere arbitrary commands to try our obedience, but means to convey to the obedient the graces of which they stand in need, and which are figured forth by the institution.

In this light, the two sacraments of the christian church have ever been considered. The power of God's grace has been supposed always to accompany the due celebration of his ordinances. Baptism has ever been regarded, not only as the sign and seal of regeneration, but as the means by which the regenerating influence of the Holy Ghost is conveyed; and, therefore, it is called the "washing of regeneration."† And the communication of the benefits of Christ's death has always been considered as the effect of the worthy receiving of the holy Eucharist.

* 2 Cor. xiii. 14.

† Tit. iii. 5.

Eucharist. Now, the administration of the sacraments has been proved to belong exclusively to the ministers of Christ, in virtue of his commission to them. They are therefore dispensers of those gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which accompany those ordinances.

There is another rite of the christian church, which has been but little considered in this country, because the *proper* Officer for its administration has unhappily been wanting in it, to which I principally adverted, when I said, that the clergy were dispensers of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit: I mean the rite of *the imposition of hands*, or what is now commonly called *Confirmation*. My subject does not require, nor will the present time permit me to enter fully on this point. I shall, therefore, only observe in the general, That this rite was administered by the apostles only, and not by the subordinate clergy—that it was administered after baptism—and that the effusion of the Holy Spirit, in his visible effects, sometimes, at least, accompanied its celebration.

When the Samaritans had been converted and baptised by Philip the Deacon, the apostles at Jerusalem sent to them Peter and John, two of their own order, who, having “prayed, laid their hands on” the converts, “and they received the Holy Ghost.”* St. Paul, finding at Ephesus a number of disciples who had received the baptism of John only, had them “baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus;” and, when he “had laid his hands on them, the Holy Ghost came on them.”† The same apostle, writing to the Hebrews, enumerates “the principles of the doctrine of Christ”—that is, the fundamental doctrines of christianity; and among them we find that “of laying on of hands.”

* Acts viii. 14, 17. † Acts xix. 1, 6.

hands.”* Your regard for the authority of the holy scriptures will, I persuade myself, prevent your disregarding the texts I have quoted in support of this apostolical practice. To suppose, as some do, that the apostles being extraordinary ministers, the rite ceased when they died, is begging a point which cannot be granted. As they were men inspired to preach the gospel, and to complete the canon of scripture—as they were witnesses of our Saviour’s resurrection, and workers of miracles in confirmation of their mission, and of the truth of the doctrines they taught, they were extraordinary ministers, and have no successors. But they were also governors of the church, preachers of the gospel, ordainers of ministers, administrators of confirmation. In these respects they were not extraordinary ministers, but exercised such powers as are of perpetual use and necessity in the church; and, in these parts of their office, they are succeeded by the bishops, or superior order of the clergy. And, as you will now have opportunities, through the merciful providence of God, of receiving confirmation from the proper officer in Christ’s church, I hope you will turn your attention to the solemn rite, and make it the subject of your serious consideration. The result, I am confident, will be a ready disposition, and earnest desire, to comply with the holy institution, and a due preparation of heart to receive those spiritual gifts and graces which, we believe, are imparted by the Holy Ghost to those who worthily receive it.

* Ch. vi. 2.

DISCOURSE I.

PART II.

THE DUTY OF CHRIST'S MINISTERS.

II. **I** COME now to consider the second division of the text—The obligations of fidelity which the clergy are under, expressed in these words —“It is required in stewards, that a man be found *faithful*.”

Fidelity, in discharging the trusts committed to them, has always been esteemed a great and necessary virtue among men. Not only civilized nations, but the less enlightened, or savage tribes, consider it as an essential qualification in every good character. The want of it destroys, or interrupts that mutual intercourse, on which human happiness greatly depends; and, by banishing confidence from the heart, leaves men a set of suspecting, distrustful beings, unconnected by those generous ties which ought to bind them together, to make either their enjoyments or their security, in any tolerable degree, complete. This necessary virtue has not been overlooked by the writers of the New Testament. Deriving their morality from the highest source, and founding it on the highest authority, they have, in fact, given a much stronger sanction to the practice of every virtue, than any former moralist could possibly have done. Accordingly, *fidelity*, both in what is committed to our trust, and
in

in the discharge of all the duties of our several stations in life, is, in the New Testament, urged upon us, not merely as convenient or necessary in civil society, but as the will and command of Almighty God, to whom we must give account of all our actions; and who will punish or reward us, in a future world, according as we shall have faithfully fulfilled, or have carelessly or wilfully neglected our duty.

St. Paul enumerates the fruits of the Spirit, and mentions them in this order—"love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance."* We have a right to conclude, that in this catalogue *faith* must mean *fidelity*, because all the other fruits of the Spirit, mentioned with it, are moral qualifications, or what we call *virtues*. The writings of the apostles, as well as the gospels, abound with precepts and exhortations, enjoining and recommending the exactest fidelity, in the discharge of our duty, in all the relations and situations of life, in which we can be placed. Princes and subjects, magistrates and people, husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, rich and poor, are all commanded and intreated to remember and fulfil, with the utmost fidelity, the duties which respectively belong to them.

When every other station is so particularly regarded, we cannot suppose the clergy are passed over without some directions concerning their duty—without some exhortations and admonitions respecting their *fidelity* in the great trust committed to them. What we so reasonably expect is duly regarded: And as to the clergy the highest possible trust is committed, so the most exact commands, the most earnest persuasions, the most importunate intreaties,

* Galat. v. 22, 23.

intreaties, are added; that can influence men, to make them exact and faithful in the discharge of their duty. Their hopes are enlivened, and their courage animated, by the promise of the divine assistance in this life, and of future blessedness to the faithful minister of Christ: And their fears are alarmed by the denunciation of God's vengeance against the unfaithful and wicked. The two epistles to Timothy, and the epistle to Titus, are almost entirely on this subject; and the greater part of St. Jude's epistle is employed in describing and condemning false teachers, and warning christians to beware of them. Nor is any fair opportunity omitted, in the other epistles, of cautioning ministers to take heed of their doctrine, that it be sound, and to their life, that it be irreproachable; that in all things they may approve themselves to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God."*

But this matter does not rest merely on the authority of the apostles. Our Saviour, by whose commission his ministers act, has bound the duty of fidelity on them by the strongest obligations, and excited them to the discharge of it by the most powerful motives. Addressing himself to his disciples in his sermon on the mount, he calls them "the salt of the earth;"† intending thereby to represent to them, that as it is the property of salt to give relish to our food, and to preserve dead bodies from putrefaction; so it was the tendency of the doctrine they were to preach, to reform the manners of men, and make them holy and acceptable to God—to preserve them, not only from corruption in their morals, but from that destruction which the justice of God shall, one day, pour upon the wicked. But as salt, if it lose its saltiness, becomes useless; so if they proved unfaithful, by corrupting the holy doc-

trines

* 1 Pet. iv. 10.

† Matt. v. 13.

trines committed to them, or by setting an evil example to the world, they would as surely be cast, by him, into outer darkness, as unsavory salt is cast out "to be trodden under foot." To make the deeper impression, he repeated his charge by another similitude—"Ye are the light of the world."* The property of light is to enable those who are within the reach of its activity to distinguish objects, and see where they go. And the design of the doctrines the apostles were to preach was, to enlighten both Jews and Gentiles, that they might see the evil state they were in, and become sensible of the mercy and wisdom of God, in providing a way for their deliverance through Christ. But if they were unfaithful to their trust, and put the cover of error over this light, or obscured it by a wicked conversation, it would be so far from exciting men to come to it and partake of its blessings, that it would be entirely unnoticed by them, or seen with disgust and aversion. He therefore pressed the duty of fidelity upon them in the strongest terms—"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven."†—Let the soundness of your doctrine, and purity of your conversation, be so conspicuous, that men may be thereby induced to give glory to God for the glad tidings you shall publish to them.

Another proof of the great attention our Saviour paid to the article of fidelity in his apostles is, his pathetic address to St. Peter, a little before his ascension. Thrice he demanded, in the most solemn manner, of that apostle, whether he *loved* him; and being thrice assured of the warmth and sincerity of his affection, he replied, "Feed my lambs—feed my sheep‡—Govern and instruct my church, over which

* Matt. v. 14. † Ver. 16. ‡ John xxi. 15, 16, 17.

which thou hast been appointed a principal pastor, with tenderness and fidelity.

After these general reflections, let us attend a little more particularly to the obligations which clergymen are under, to be faithful "stewards of the mysteries of God." And,

1. The honour of Almighty God is concerned in their conduct; and *that* is a high obligation on them to be faithful in discharging the duties of their ministry.

The trust that God has, in the course of his providence, reposed in the ministers of his church, is greater than any trust reposed in any other men. The trust committed to kings, and princes, and rulers, and magistrates, relates to this life. They are the servants of God, and exercise a delegated power from him, to govern and conduct the affairs of civil societies, so as best to secure and promote human happiness. It is, therefore, our duty to reverence and honour them, and, in all things lawful, to obey them for conscience sake; and to pray to God for them, that under their administration we may be protected from violence and persecution, and, being godly and quietly governed, may joyfully serve and praise him in his holy church. But the trust committed to the ministers of Christ relates to eternity; they being appointed by God to govern and manage the affairs of his church, so as best to promote and secure the everlasting felicity of his people. In proportion as God has committed greater and dearer interests to their hands, their obligations become the stronger to be faithful in their ministry, and to consult and advance his honour, in the due execution of their office.

As our Creator, God is entitled to our adoration; as our Governor, to our obedience; as our Protector, to our prayers; as our Preserver, to our gratitude

titude and praise. When we pay to God that adoration, and worship, and obedience, and praise, which are due to him, we honour him as far as he can receive honour from us. It becomes, then, the duty of the ministers of Christ to make the being of God known unto men, that they may worship and serve him; to declare his moral government, that he may be obeyed; to display his readiness to help in all our wants and necessities, that prayer may be made unto him; to proclaim the goodness and benignity of his nature, that our grateful praises may ascend to the throne of his majesty. In the faithful discharge of their duty, in these respects, the honour of God is immediately concerned, and the glory of his name deeply interested. And so is,

2. The efficacy of Christ's redemption.

It has pleased God, for the salvation of a fallen, miserable world, to send his Son into it, to work out its redemption—to make atonement for sin, and reconcile offending man to the purity of his own nature, that he might, through the Mediator, extend mercy and pardon to him, and receive him to life and happiness in a future world. You have heard in the first discourse, that the preaching of this reconciliation is committed to the ministers of the christian church, by the express commission of our Saviour. In proportion then, as they shall be unfaithful in their ministry, this atonement will be unknown or disregarded—the terms of this reconciliation misunderstood or misapplied—and the intended mercy of God frustrated and disappointed. How strong an obligation does this consideration carry with it! Who that ever had seriousness enough upon his mind to become a clergyman, can possibly disregard it! Well might St. Paul say—
“Necessity is laid upon me: Yea, wo is unto me
if

if I preach not the gospel.”* God grant that every minister of Christ may feel this necessity, and remember that “it is required in stewards,” especially in such stewards, “that a man be found faithful!”

3. Another obligation which lies on the ministers of Christ to be faithful in their stewardship is, that the eternal happiness of the people committed to their charge, in a good degree, depends on their fidelity.

If they have any humanity—any compassion towards their fellow creatures, they will not bear the thought, that any one, that any of those especially who are under their care, should, through their fault, fall into the dreadful state of eternal perdition. The sharpest anguish attends the bare supposition. God forbid it should ever be realized by any minister of his church! Better would it be for such a man had he never been born. To think, that Christ left the throne of his glory, and appeared in the humblest form of humanity; suffered the infirmities and distresses of our nature, in a life of poverty and want; endured the perverseness and contradiction of sinners, the malice, persecutions, scoffs, and revilings of wicked men, the temptations of Satan, and the full burden of God’s wrath on the sins of the world in the agonies of a cruel crucifixion, made more bitter by the dereliction of his Father, to think that he sustained all this misery, that he might reconcile us to God, and open to us the gate of everlasting life close barred by sin—and, that this mercy, this goodness, this love, has, in any instance, been rendered abortive through his fault, must, to a wicked unfaithful minister, add new keenness to the vengeance of God. He who is unmoved by such reflections must be left to the
mercy

mercy of God, whose mercy, indeed, he has no right to expect, but rather that "judgment, and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries" in the day of the Lord.*

4. Another obligation on clergymen to be faithful in their stewardship, arises from the regard which they ought to have to their own characters, and to the dignity of the order to which they belong.

It is always considered, by virtuous people, whose estimation alone is worth regarding, to be a disgrace and reproach to a man to act inconsistently with the profession he makes, or the station he fills. Such persons are supposed to be void of principle, and destitute of common prudence; and no one places much confidence in them. Now a clergyman, at his ordination, declares, that he is moved by the Holy Ghost to take that work and ministry upon him; that he is influenced by an earnest desire of promoting the salvation of souls; and that he will apply himself diligently and faithfully, by the help of God, to the duties of his sacred office, according to his best ability.† It would, therefore, be the lowest baseness to disregard such awful professions, and so solemn a promise voluntarily made; and to the sincerity of which the divine Omniscience was called to bear witness.

The station also which clergymen fill in the church is of the highest dignity. Veneration and reverence are annexed to their order by the common courtesy of christians, out of regard to God, whose ministers they are. And this veneration is justified by the general good conduct, and faithful labours of those who belong to it. But when a clergyman departs from that propriety of behaviour which he

VOL. I.

E

ought

* Heb. x. 27.

† See the offices of ordination.

ought to maintain, and becomes less distinguished for his care and fidelity in his duty, than for his inattention and negligence, he brings reproach, not only on himself, but on his brethren also: Good people are filled with suspicions and apprehensions, and they who are otherwise with mirth and exultation. The former are checked in their christian course, the latter encouraged in their evil practices. The faithful steward shares in the disgrace, and finds his usefulness lessened by his brother's ill conduct. These considerations will have their proper weight on ingenuous minds, and, taken together, lay the strongest obligations on all the ministers of Christ, to remember that "it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful"—that their ministry is a talent committed to them by their Master and Lord, and unless it be faithfully improved, they cannot expect to receive the approbation of their Judge, or ever to have the joyful voice of Christ—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant—enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."*

Thus strong and weighty are the obligations which the "stewards of the mysteries of God" are under to be faithful. Let us next see in what particular instances we may reasonably expect their fidelity should be principally shewn.

1. It must be their duty faithfully to declare the whole will of God, and fully to make known the œconomy of redemption to the people of their charge, according to the scripture—persuading and entreating them to receive it, and warning them of the danger of rejecting it.

The Gospel, which makes known the œconomy of the redemption and salvation of men through Christ, contains those mysteries of God of which his ministers are the stewards. Fidelity, therefore, requires

* Matt. xxv. 21.

requires that they declare, when circumstances make it proper, the whole gospel, without keeping back or disguising any part of it—That they endeavour to explain and illustrate it, as the subject shall permit, so as to give common capacities the best chance to understand it—That they persuade people to receive it, by such motives as are proper to it; and caution them against rejecting it, by such reasons and arguments as the nature of the case shall furnish—That they make the holy scriptures, especially the New Testament, the rule of their preaching, and the standard of all the doctrines they shall teach—That they, therefore, study the scriptures, and endeavour to come at their true meaning by comparing one part with another, and keeping their general scope in constant view; that so they may make all particular doctrines uniformly consistent with each other, and with the general design of God's dispensations to men. They will also take care to give every particular doctrine its proper place and due weight, laying the greatest stress upon fundamental points and essential principles, and enforcing all with just and candid reasons, and sober, dispassionate arguments—such as may convince the judgment, without exciting resentment or prejudice.

2. Fidelity will require that they preach the gospel *sincerely*, that is, *purely*; without mixing with it any thing which does not belong to it.

St. Paul cautions preachers against mingling vain philosophy with the doctrines of the gospel, and calls it *corrupting* the word of God—intimating that such preachers acted like knavish inn-keepers, who mix their wines to obtain the greater gain.*

Some people have a natural or acquired taste for nice distinctions, and subtle definitions; but a minister of Christ should remember that metaphysics and

* 2 Cor. ii. 17.

and philosophy have their modes; whereas the gospel is always the same. What is approved philosophy at present, fifty years hence may be exploded; but sound divinity now, will be sound divinity to the end of the world.

And, if philosophical points which are foreign to the gospel ought to be avoided, certainly every other matter that is equally foreign ought to be avoided also. The gospel preacher will therefore refrain from all political and party subjects—As a minister of Christ he can have nothing to do with them. “My kingdom,” said Christ, “is not of this world;”^{*} consequently, his doctrines ought not to be drawn from their true scope, to accommodate them to worldly purposes. God has placed the management of worldly affairs in other hands. Our business is with the things of eternity. Let every one keep in his own sphere, and serve God faithfully in that station to which his providence has called him.

Young men of all professions are apt to be biassed by the authority of great names. Against this propensity clergymen should guard themselves. Deference is undoubtedly due to the judgment and opinions of men eminent for their abilities and learning: But their sentiments should not be adopted merely on account of their names, without some previous examination, and comparison with the sacred oracles. In this sense, they are to call no man on earth master, “for one is” their “master, even Christ;”[†] and his revelation is their school, his Spirit, their instructor. Fidelity to this master requires that they abide humbly in his school, and then they need not doubt the influence of his Spirit to lead and direct them in the way of truth. Again;

Men

^{*} John xviii. 36.

[†] Matt. xxiii. 8.

Men of a speculative turn of mind get sometimes deeply engaged in a particular theological system; and, persuading themselves of its truth, are too ready to warp particular expressions of scripture, or pare them away, so as to make them apparently coincide with their favourite scheme. Positiveness and obstinacy too often follow. They are sure they are right—the scripture is on their side, and they must declare the truth. To them, their plan becomes *the gospel*—engrosses their thoughts and conversation—is made the general subject of their sermons, and when they gain a proselyte from the truth, they flatter themselves they have gained a convert to Christ. To illustrate this remark, by particular instances, would appear invidious; and, I persuade myself, little needs be said to guard those ministers of Christ, who are disposed to be faithful, against so preposterous a conduct.

Let me however remark, that the author of the text has, in this Epistle,* expressed himself in such a manner, as gives us his full sentiments in a similar case. He declares that in his preaching at Corinth, he had laid the true foundation of their faith—Christ crucified†—that if the preachers who came after him built on that foundation with good and proper materials—“gold, silver, precious stones”—denoting sound doctrine and principles—they should, from their master, receive the reward of their fidelity. But if they built with “wood, hay, stubble”—denoting doctrines and principles which were not truly christian, but the effects of human invention or heretical error—they did it at their peril, and must abide the consequence. It would be difficult to assign a good reason why all errors in doctrine may not be fairly included in this decision of St. Paul. For though the best commen-

tators

* Chap. iii. 10—15. † 1 Cor. ii. 2.

tators* suppose, that by the *day*, which the apostle says should “*reveal*,” and “*make manifest*,” every man’s work, is meant the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, and that the *fire* he mentions signifies the extreme distress of that period, which, as fire tries gold and silver, would try and prove every man’s real state, whether he were a true and faithful christian, or only an hypocritical or heretical professor; the former of whom only would be able to endure the trial of that day: Yet, as the destruction of Jerusalem is a type and figure of the final destruction of the world, we may safely conclude, that in that tremendous day, when not only the open practices of men shall be brought into judgment, but the thoughts of all hearts shall be revealed; the faithful ministers, who have adhered to the true foundation, and have built on it with the true and catholic doctrines of Christianity, shall, from their Lord and Master, receive a suitable reward: While they who have erred from the truth, and have raised on this foundation doctrines and principles which belong not to it, “*shall suffer loss*”—shall lose the reward which awaits the faithful minister. Yet they themselves, provided they have not destroyed the foundation—denied the faith of Christ crucified—but only built with unsuitable and perishing materials, “*shall be saved; yet so as by fire*”—through extreme distress, and with great difficulty and danger. This danger every prudent minister would wish to avoid, and will, therefore, be careful not to mix his own fancies with the doctrines of Christ, nor raise a superstructure of erroneous or doubtful doctrines upon the foundation which the holy apostles have laid; but will determine with St. Paul, “*to know nothing among*” his people, “*save Jesus Christ, and him crucified,*”† and

* Dr. Hammond, and Dr. Whitby. † 1 Cor. ii. 2.

and to conform his sentiments and discourses to that ground-work of the christian religion.

3. We have a right to expect that clergymen will shew their fidelity by doing their duty *diligently*—embracing every proper occasion to inculcate the doctrines of Christ, and promote the spiritual interest of his people, by prayers, sermons, catechising, and conversation, as the opportunity may be: That they attend on the offices of religion with *fergency*; that all may perceive it to be their earnest desire to discharge their duty effectually, to the honour of God, and the salvation of his people: That they conduct themselves *meekly* and *temperately*; avoiding all appearance of anger and intolerance towards those who differ from, or oppose them; aiming to convince by reason and mildness, not to overbear by authority and heat.

4. We may reasonably suppose that clergymen will live, agreeably to their profession, in all holy conversation and godliness. Those clergymen can have but little regard to fidelity, who neglect their moral behaviour, or are indifferent about their character. They, not only, have “the mysteries of God” committed to them as stewards, but they are set as patterns and examples “to believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”* If they fail in this matter, they fail in a most essential point, and it is impossible to tell how far the ruin, by their ill-conduct, may extend. To themselves it must be fatal; and happy will it be for their people, if they partake not in their destruction. They should, therefore, consider it as an object of the first consequence, to regulate their lives by the precepts of holy scripture; not only avoiding open scandal, but regarding propriety of conduct; cultivating simplicity of manners, and modesty

* 1 Tim. iv. 10.

defty of deportment: and, by maintaining a difinterested conduct, convince their people that they feek not their wealth, but their welfare—not to be their mafters, but their patterns and guides, that together they may fo pafs through things temporal, that they “ finally lofe not the things eternal.”*

5. Another instance in which a clergyman ought to fhew his fidelity is that of private admonition and reproof. This duty, it muft be confefled, is attended with many difficulties, and requires judgement and prudence to difcharge it to advantage. Under the beft management there is always fome danger of exciting refentment. When this danger is apparent, admonition had better be omitted, till God’s providence fhall prefent an opportunity of doing it to greater advantage. But where there is a fair chance of doing good, a clergyman’s duty requires him to ufe it, however difagreeable the task may be. Some art, great mildnefs, and abfolute fecrecy, are always neceffary to make it fuccefsful.

With regard to public reproof, I fear, it oftner does harm than good. When improper behaviour deferves it, the party is commonly irritated by fomething which has happened, and, if then reproved, is apt to make an affrontive or profane reply: and, inftead of amendment, refentment follows. Should, however, a cafe happen which requires that the honour of God, or of our Redeemer, be immediately vindicated, fidelity will oblige a clergyman to risk refentment and ill-ufage, rather than betray either fear or negligence in fupporting the reverence due to his Creator. But thefe are cafes which always fpeak for themfelves, and will not admit of being brought under particular regulations.

6. A faith-

* Collect for fourth Sunday after Trinity.

6. A faithful clergyman will attend to the administration of the sacraments, and other offices of religion, on all proper occasions, with gravity, solemnity, and devotion—He will visit and comfort the sick and troubled in mind—He will relieve the poor, and befriend the oppressed, as God shall give him ability.

To see a minister negligent or indifferent about the instituted means of religion, must be a great discouragement to well-disposed people. They will be tempted to disregard religion, if their minister sets light by its institutions. For instance—Should he neglect or needlessly postpone the usual returns of administering the holy Communion, with what face could he exhort his people to be frequent at it? Or if he conduct its administration lightly, carelessly, or in a hurried manner, how shall he persuade people that there is any matter of importance in it? Fidelity, therefore, requires, that he attend on this, and all the other ordinances of religion, with punctuality and devotion—and that he omit no opportunity of recommending them to his people by his own good example, as well as by his discourses.

With regard to the sick and afflicted, they require his attention on a double account. They cannot attend on public prayers and instruction; and possibly there is no time in which they are more needed, or would do so much good, as in those hours of distress, when worldly dependence is lessened, and the heart is softened and carried out in trust and hope in the Almighty. Besides, they are suffering pain and anguish, and want the consolations of friendship, as well as the aids of religion—and who so proper to minister both, as a faithful and affectionate clergyman, who must be their friend by all the ties of humanity and religion?

The poor and oppressed must also partake of his attention. His ability may not enable him to give much in relief to the necessitous: His want of power or influence may prevent his shielding the oppressed from the malice of his persecutor. But something he can do in both cases. To the little which he can give to the poor, he can add his prayers and consolations; and, also, his advice and cautions against those temptations, which poverty often brings with it, and too often renders successful. Though he may want power to rescue the oppressed from the hand of violence, his mediation may be of real service. If he fail, no harm is done; and his good disposition will meet with the approbation of his Saviour and Judge, who will esteem those offices of christian benevolence which are done to his afflicted children as done to himself, and will reward them accordingly; and will consider the neglect of them as a defect in that fidelity which we owe to him, and in that humanity which is due to all men—which the whole system of his gospel tends to inspire, and which its laws so strictly enjoin.

DISCOURSE I.

PART III.

THE DUTY OF THE PEOPLE TOWARDS THE MINISTERS OF CHRIST.

IN the first part of this discourse I considered the general tenor of the text, shewed the occasion on which it was written, and its connection with the apostle's subject. I then entered more particularly into its meaning, and explained the sense of the expressions—"ministers of Christ," and "stewards of the mysteries of God"—ascertaining the authority on which clergymen act, and shewing in what respects they are "ministers of Christ," and "stewards of the mysteries of God."

In the second part, I considered the obligations of fidelity which the ministers of Christ are under, and pointed out the particular instances in which we might reasonably expect they would shew it.

My present design is to make some inferences from what has been said. These inferences will principally relate to the conduct of the people towards the ministers of Christ who are set over them.

When speaking of the office and duty of clergymen, I used, as you must be sensible, all freedom of sentiment and expression; and I have to request that you would indulge me in the same freedom
now.

now. Plainness of speech in preaching becomes my age and character; and it is my duty. And, I persuade myself, you will not decline your duty to hear me patiently, both now, and whenever it shall please God to give me an opportunity of addressing you from the pulpit. I have also to request, that should any thing, at any time, come from me, to which you cannot immediately assent, that you would take time, and give it your candid consideration; and then, I flatter myself, I shall escape all just censure.

1. You have had explained to you, in the first part of this discourse, the authority under which clergymen act. It was there proved, that their office is the institution of Christ, and their powers derived from him: that he has appointed them to be governors and teachers in his church; has committed to their hands its doctrines and discipline, and the administration of his ordinances—in short, the whole mystery of reconciliation with God thro' him. Hence arises a plain duty on your part, namely, to receive their instructions, to submit to their government, to reverence their authority, to partake with them in the ordinances of religion, and to preserve the unity of the church, in faith, in discipline, and in worship. If you attend not on their ministry, with regard to you their appointment is vain: if you reject their government, you reject the institution of Christ: if you despise their authority, you despise him that sent them: if you refuse to partake in the ordinances of religion, you cut yourselves off from the communion of saints; and if you break the unity of the church, in faith, or discipline, or worship, you fall under the condemnation of those christians who walk disorderly and cause divisions, whom the apostle advises us to avoid, lest the contagion of their example should infect the faithful. — That

That there is an unwillingness in men to submit to any authority but of their own appointment, daily observation will convince us. It is the necessary consequence of the present fashionable opinion, that all government is derived from the people; and the practice of the different denominations of Protestants is full proof, that this opinion is not confined to civil, but extends itself to ecclesiastical authority: witness the different and discordant modes of church government which the different Protestant sects have instituted. It is not always safe to contradict popular opinions; and the preacher, who shall do so, will, at least, be heard with shyness, and will escape well, if he escape without resentment.

With regard to civil authority, I shall say nothing. If it be necessary to ascertain its foundation, let those do it who are concerned in its administration. But with regard to the government of the church, I must, as a faithful minister of Christ, and a governor in his church, bear my testimony against the position, that *ecclesiastical or spiritual powers are in any sense derived from the people, or from any human authority.* If we stop short of Christ, the supreme head of his church, we have no foundation on which to rest, nor any source from which to derive any spiritual power at all. Every thing will be left vague and uncertain—If a man preach, who sent him? * If he administer the sacraments, who commissioned him? If he take upon him the government of the church, who authorised him? If you say the people—whence did the people get their power? If you say, from God—produce the commission. If you say, from nature—then plainly not from Christ. Are the doctrines we preach, the doctrines of *nature*? the sacraments we administer, the

* Rom. x. 15.

the sacraments of *nature*? the church we govern, the church of *nature*? While the doctrines are Christ's doctrines, the sacraments Christ's sacraments, and the church Christ's church, the ministers must be Christ's ministers, and derive their authority from him, or they have no right to preach his word, administer his sacraments, or govern his church, be their pretensions to powers from *nature*, derived through the people, ever so great, or ever so strongly asserted. Error, however popular, is error still; and false claims, however supported by the multitude, are still false claims.

A christian congregation, under particular circumstances, may have a right to choose a minister; and when, by the Bishop's appointment, he is settled among them, he becomes, in one sense, *their* minister; that is, he is to exercise his office among them. But his clerical powers, his official authority, he receives not from them, but from Christ, whose minister he is to that congregation, and he is their minister, or "servant for Jesus' sake."*

When Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world,"† he certainly meant that he had a kingdom *in* the world, though not *of* it. This kingdom is sometimes called his church; sometimes his body; sometimes his elect; sometimes the company of the faithful. These phrases suppose it to be a *society* or *community*, and, of course, to be governed by stated laws, and a fixed polity. In this light it is always considered and described in the New Testament. If it be not of this world, then it is not founded on worldly authority, nor established on worldly principles, nor governed by worldly maxims, nor supported by worldly rewards and punishments. If it were, it would, to all intents and purposes, be a kingdom of this world. This is in exact

* 2 Cor. iv. 5.

† John xviii. 36.

exact agreement with what was said of the authority of the christian clergy—their powers are not of this world, nor their doctrines, nor the maxims of their government, nor the censures they inflict.

I am ready to acknowledge, that whenever, and to whatever degree, the clergy depart from this line, and mix worldly authority, doctrines, maxims of government, censures or punishments, with their religious constitution and discipline, they, at the same time, and in the same degree, depart from the true idea and spirit of Christ's kingdom, and make it a kingdom of this world. How far christian states, and kingdoms, and churches, have erred in this matter, is not now my business to inquire. Some of them seem to have so incorporated their civil and religious establishments together, that, whatever inconveniencies may thence arise to either, it might probably be productive of more evil than good to attempt a hasty separation. But this militates not against what I have said—My design having been to lead your attention to the true foundation and nature of clerical authority in Christ's church, and not to the particular management of it in any country.

Should jealousies rise respecting the high authority which I contend is given to the clergy: should it be said that they are made masters of the faith, opinions, and morals of the people; and that it is dangerous to trust powers of such strong and extensive operation in the hands of any particular order of men—I beg it may be considered, that the civil authority has a full coercive power over the clergy, as far as the peace and security of society are concerned. Clergymen are, equally with others, subjects of the state, bound by its laws, and liable to its punishments. The objection, then, reaches not to the affairs of civil government. Let it be also remembered, that,

The

The clergy are the religious instructors and guides of the people, not the Lords of their faith and consciences. The Bible contains the whole system of doctrines which they are to preach, of morals which they are to inculcate, and of government which they are to exercise: and the Bible is as open to the people, as to the clergy. The general principles of christianity are, also, so well understood, and the spirit of liberty so high, that no evil can be justly apprehended from clerical powers.

If it be said, that evils, and great ones too, have risen from the exercise of that power which I claim for the clergy, I apprehend it to be a mistake. Evils, I readily own, have risen from the power of the clergy; but it has been from the mixture of worldly with clerical power. This has, in some ages and countries, given them an opportunity of exercising a power oppressive to the people; of establishing human systems for articles of faith; of making their sacred office an occasion of worldly gain, and of persecuting those who would not submit to them; and too many among them (I speak not to reproach any particular age or country) have been wicked, or inconsiderate enough, to avail themselves of the circumstances of the times, and seek their own aggrandizement, more than the honour of God. They have done what all the nations of the world can witness is done every day by men who belong not to the clerical order—they have abused the power trusted to them by the state; yet not more so than others. To prevent this abuse, keep worldly power out of their hands. Only remember, that power abused changes not its nature, because it is abused by a layman: It is just the same with power abused by a clergyman—less invidious perhaps, but its evils as great.

State

State the matter fairly, and judge candidly. Can the power of preaching the gospel, administering the sacraments, governing the church, censuring immoral members, affect either your liberty or your property? No; but it may affect your reputation.—If you live in open immorality of any kind, and are on that account debarred from the holy Communion—is it the rejection from the Communion, or the open immorality in which you live that affects your reputation? Correct the immorality, and the rejection will cease.

While you have the privilege of choosing your minister, and he is dependent on you for his subsistence, you have as much controul over him, as reasonable men would wish to have—possibly more than is really consistent with the full prosperity of the church, or your own best advantage—considering too, that you have the Bible before you, to enable you to judge how well his conduct comports with the rules there prescribed to him. Something is also to be considered on the other hand, namely; That as your minister is not to be the master of your faith and consciences, so neither ought he to be the slave of caprice and popular humour.

You see upon what foundation the authority of the Clergy stands: you see also the obligations you are under to submit to it—as far, at least, as the constitution of Christ's Church, and the nature and end of his religion require. Whether you will submit to it, or reject it, remains with you to determine. But your determination will not affect the truth, though it will affect, and deeply too, your own everlasting welfare. If I have stated the matter *truly*, it will still be *true*, though you reject it. Should you reject it, it will be at your peril, and the consequence you must abide. And remember, God is your judge: to him your hearts are open:

he will not condemn the innocent, nor be severe in marking what is done amiss by the weak or ignorant. But perverseness and obstinacy have no plea—worldly attachments and vicious affections no excuse. Weigh the matter fairly, and, like reasonable men, resolve to pursue the *truth*, whithersoever it may lead you. And may the spirit of God influence the moments of your consideration, and guide you in the way of truth!

2. You have heard how great a charge is committed to the clergy “as ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.” You have heard, also, the obligations they are under to attend to their ministry, and to be faithful in their stewardship. The exactness of the judgment they must undergo, and the severity of the condemnation under which they will fall, if they fail in either, have, also, been laid before you. The weight of the charge which lies on them, the difficulty of executing it faithfully and effectually, the temptations to which they are exposed in the course of their ministry, and the danger and fatal consequences of their failure, both to themselves and others, must be apparent to you; and I flatter myself, you have no inclination to increase, but a disposition to lighten the heavy burden that lies on them. Consider what, under these circumstances, ought to be your sentiments and conduct toward them. On your conduct, in a great degree, depend their fidelity, and success. If you wilfully, or carelessly throw obstructions in their way, you may not only defeat their prospect of success, but drive them, in order to get rid of those obstructions, into some improprieties of conduct, which they would otherwise have easily avoided. In such cases, the odium is wholly theirs, but the crime is partly yours. One crime, indeed, is wholly yours, and a dreadful

ful one it is—the crime of having caused your brother—nay, your minister to *offend*. Of the heinousness of this crime judge ye from what your Saviour has thought those to deserve, who cause even one of the least in his kingdom to offend by sinning against God—“Who so shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.”*

The clergy, being taken from among your brethren, are men of the same tempers and passions with yourselves; and, though set to watch over your souls, and guide your feet in the way of salvation, are subject to the infirmities of nature, in common with other christians. They have, indeed, a sacred and precious “treasure” committed to them, but they have it “in earthen vessels”†, liable, not only to bodily casualties and diseases, but to mental weaknesses and disorders. These circumstances point out what ought to be your behaviour toward them.

It cannot be expected but that they should in many instances feel, and in some instances sink under, the weaknesses of nature. Imperfection belongs to man, and infirmity is his constant attendant. These may produce imprudencies: they may lead to improprieties of conduct: they may end in real faults: they may degenerate into open vice. The true christian spirit will dispose you to bear with imprudencies and improprieties of the lighter kind, and to endeavour to correct them by friendly hints and explanations—to throw a veil over real faults, especially when exposing them will answer no good purpose—and will prevent you from aggravating open vices which you cannot conceal. In this way, you will

* Matt. xviii. 6.

† 2 Cor. iv. 7.

will prove yourselves to be christians in *deed*, as well as in *name*—possessed of that “charity” which “never faileth,” but which “is kind and envieth not;” which “is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil;” which “rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;” which “beareth, believeth, hopeth, endureth all things;”^{*} which covereth even “the multitude of our neighbour’s sins,”[†] and concealeth his transgressions from the eye of observation: the piety of Shem and Japheth will be yours; and the blessing of Noah will, in its best, its spiritual sense, be made good to you, in the kingdom of God.

You will not suppose that I am pleading for indulgence to immoral clergymen. I have no conception of a worse character. But their vices should not be exaggerated, nor needlessly exposed. When the honour of our holy religion, the dignity of the sacred order, or the benefit of the people, can be promoted, let their iniquities be exposed and punished, that others may fear to offend. But till some, at least, of these good ends can be answered, let not the light of day behold their works of darkness, lest religion, also, suffer some part of that reproach and contempt which they most justly deserve.

Should any congregation be so unhappy as to have a wicked clergyman for their minister, the remedy is short and easy. Upon complaint to the Bishop, and due proof of his crimes, he will fall under the censure of deprivation.

There is, however, one case relating to unworthy ministers, which involves more difficulty in its management, because it is a case in which the people are as deeply concerned as the minister. A case may arise, where the minister may be, not only irreproachable, but exemplary in his moral conduct;

and

* 1. Cor. xiii. 4, &c.

† 1. Pet. iv. 8.

and yet so tinctured with heresy and false doctrine, as to be unfit to have a christian congregation under his charge. His congregation may be corrupted by his influence, so as to be pleased with him and his errors. To get rid of such a man is not easy. Should the Bishop call him to account, his congregation will neither accuse him, nor appear as evidences against him—but would probably countenance and support him against any censure; and, rather than give him up, make a schism in the church. Besides, to condemn him upon suspicion or report would be unjust and cruel. Nor does the mischief stop here—Should God's providence remove him, the congregation having the right of choosing their minister, and being corrupted by erroneous principles, will not fail to choose one agreeable to themselves, that is, as deeply sunk in error as they are:—Thus error has a chance of being perpetual.

There is but one remedy in this case, and that is for the people to wave, or abate this right, which, to say the most, is but a doubtful one, and pregnant with more mischief than good—tending to continue error in the church, and to breed parties and animosities in the congregations, and thereby keep them long unsupplied. Was the appointment of ministers directly in the Bishop with the advice of the clergy, as such an appointment could be only during pleasure, it would be easy to get rid of an unworthy minister—parties in the congregations would be prevented, and error would have but little chance of being permanent.

That the people should concede this point is rather to be wished, than expected. If they knew their own good, and were sensible how much it would conduce to peace and unity in the church, and, consequently, to its stability and prosperity, they

they would scarcely hesitate. Thus much, however, we have a right to expect—That they will consult their Bishop and clergy in the choice of their minister, and will pay proper regard to their judgment and authority, should the charge of heretical doctrines bring the censure of his Bishop on him.

From this disagreeable subject, let us turn our attention to an object worthy of your regard—the good and faithful clergyman, who “labours in the word and doctrine,”* and is an example to his flock, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.”† This character you will reverence—with such a minister you will go to the house of God from inclination, as well as duty. There, love will add fervor to *your* devotions, and give sweetness to *his* instructions. You will delight to remember, and recount his good dispositions and actions. You will support him in his ministry, and will assist in removing every impediment out of his way; that his piety may have free scope, and his zeal no restraint, but from his knowledge and prudence. You will defend his character from the attacks of malice, the underminings of envy, and the insinuations of idle talkers. You will comfort him in sickness, and sympathize with him in all his distresses. You will imitate his faith, and patience, and good works. You will pray to God for him, and bless his holy name for the benefit of such a guide in your heavenly journey—May God realize this happiness to every one of you!

3. You have heard, not only how great a charge is committed to the ministers of Christ, but also how extensive and various their duty must be. If they discharge it with diligence and fidelity, you must be sensible it will require their whole attention and time, especially if their parish be large.

Yet

* 1. Tim. v. 17.

† 1. Tim. iv. 12.

Yet they are to preach twice on Sundays, and once at least on the festivals, besides occasional lectures and catechetical discourses. You expect, and have a right to do so, that they prepare themselves to preach with propriety and some degree of accuracy, and with application of the subject to your situation and circumstances. Hence arises your duty to provide the necessaries and comforts of life, and in such a stile as their station and labours give them a right to expect; that they may attend on their duty, without being hurried by the cares of the world, or perplexed by a solicitude for their daily support.

Under the law, the Priests and Levites, when doing duty in the temple, were supported by the sacrifices; and God commanded the people to be liberal in their offerings, that there might be plenty of food for his officiating ministers. In their cities, they were supported by the tithes which God gave them for their inheritance; because they had no inheritance of lands among their brethren. I mention this circumstance to shew that God did provide for the Levites, in a manner equally plentiful and sure, with the rest of the tribes—that it is, therefore, reasonable in itself, as well as the will of God, that his ministers should have an equal share of the good things of this life with other people; and that thus to provide for them is the duty of the people where they serve.

With regard to tithes particularly, I have no wish to have any thing to do with them. They are a mode of supporting the clergy which, in the present disposition of the world, has several inconveniencies attending it. They are often paid grudgingly and with ill temper, and sometimes occasion law-suits between the minister and people, which greatly obstruct his usefulness. Where, however, the State, or the benevolence of particular people, has,

has, in any way, made provision for the clergy, it is a monstrous iniquity to defraud them of their right, merely because they are clergymen, and cannot contest that right, as others might do, for fear of destroying their own usefulness, and thereby defeating the end of their appointment.

This is a species of robbery of the worst kind—a robbing of God in the persons of his servants: For his servants your ministers are; and he has appointed them their wages—the necessities and deficiencies of life. He has made *you* their paymasters, and he expects, not justice only, but liberality from you. It is a tribute he exacts in acknowledgment of his sovereignty, and of the many blessings of providence and grace which he confers on you. The law of man, as well as of God, requires that you clothe and feed your servants, in consideration of their bodily labour. Under the Old Testament, God extended his care even to brute animals—“thou shalt not muzzle the ox, when he treadeth out the corn”*—“thou shalt not tie up his mouth while, with his feet, he is threshing out that corn for thy use which his labour has raised; but shalt permit him to take freely of it, while so employed.” Quoting this text,† St. Paul asks—“Doth God take care of oxen; or saith he it”—did he give that command, “altogether for our sakes”—for the sake of his ministers? for our sakes, no doubt, this is written: That he that plougheth, should plough in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope, should be partaker of his hope‡—“That as he who plougheth and soweth, hopes to reap and enjoy the fruits of his labour, so he who laboureth in the gospel should have his just hope fulfilled, and live by the gospel.” That this is the drift of St. Paul’s argument appears from the next verse—

“If

* Deut. xxv. 4. † 1. Cor. ix. ‡ Ver. 10.

"If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing, if we shall reap your carnal things?"

The primitive christians had no stated revenue for their clergy. They enjoyed neither tithes, nor taxes, nor lands. In imitation of the Jewish establishment, they who waited at the altar were "partakers with the altar."* When the people were to approach the altar and receive the sacred mysteries, they brought such a portion of the produce of their farms, or occupations, as their liberality prompted them to give, for the supply of the holy table, the support of the clergy, and relief of the poor. This was their offering; and without this offering, no one thought himself entitled to come, for none presumed to appear before the Lord empty;† but a free-will offering accompanied the celebration of the holy Communion, at least on festival days. To this custom the Apostle alludes, in the passage lately cited, and also in another of his Epistles, when he says—"We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle"‡—an altar, by which, not the Jewish, but only the Christian priesthood has a right to be supported.

Whether it would have been better to have continued this free and primitive method of supporting the clergy, may admit of a doubt. The manners of different ages and countries will be various: the ability and conveniency of the people ought to be regarded, and that mode adopted which is best accommodated to their situation. Only "let him, that is taught in the word, minister unto him that teacheth, in all good things"—or, *of all his good things*.§ Let the clergy and their families be decently supported; and the people have a right to consult their own conveniency with regard to the

VOL. I.

H

mode,

* Ver. 13. † Deut. xvi. 16. ‡ Heb. xiii. 10. § Gal. vi. 6.

mode, and their ability with respect to the quantity. Always remembering, that—"He which soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly: and he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully."* Nor be anxiously apprehensive that your liberality will bring you to poverty—for, God is able to make all grace abound towards you†—God will be very gracious to you—"That ye always having all-sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." Did you ever know liberality of this kind bring poverty in its train? If a man give freely, and succeed in his affairs, how know you whether his success be not the blessing of God on his liberality? Or if he give grudgingly and meet with disasters, may they not be the frowns of providence on his stingy disposition?

Besides, the support of the clergy is an act of justice: It is the hire of their labour, and you cannot honestly withhold it. Yet God will consider and reward it, as mere bounty and liberality—"for he is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which love ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister."‡

To God's grace and holy spirit I commend you; beseeching him, that as he "ministereth seed to the sower," he would "both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness,"§ that being "enriched in every thing to all bountifulness," ye may "glorify God" by "your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and" by "your liberal distribution unto them" who preach it, "and unto all" who need. Amen.

* 2 Cor. ix. 6.

† Ver. 8.

‡ Heb. vi. 10.

§ 2 Cor. ix. 10, 11, 13.

DISCOURSE II.

PART I.

THE APOSTOLICAL COMMISSION.

JOHN XX. 21, 22, 23. *Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*

HAVING, in the first part of the preceding discourse, made some general remarks on the Commission which, after his resurrection, our Saviour gave to his Apostles, my present design is to consider that commission more particularly, and endeavour to ascertain what powers and privileges are contained in it. To bring what I have to say on the subject into some order, I shall inquire,

- I. Into the meaning of those words of our Saviour to his Apostles—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you."
- II. Into the meaning of his *breathing on them*, and saying—"Receive ye the Holy Ghost."
- III. Into the meaning of his declaration to them, "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained."

I. I am

1. I am to inquire into the meaning of the words of our Saviour to his Apostles—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." And,

1. The Father sent him as a Prophet to make known his will, and to do such miracles as were sufficient to establish his divine mission.

To declare the will of God is the proper business of prophets; and their distinguishing character is, that they speak not by their own will, but as they are "moved by the Holy Ghost."* Miracles, and foretelling future events, belong to this office, as its credentials—to gain attention and credit to the prophet's declarations. That our Saviour Christ did claim, and exercise this office, when in the world, might be proved by a great number of citations from the New Testament. The two Apostles who conversed with him on the road to Emmaus, without knowing him, speak of him as "a prophet mighty in deed and word, before God and all the people."† He claimed the character to himself, when reading this passage from Isaiah, in the synagogue at Nazareth—"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord"‡—he declared to the congregation, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." If those holy men deserved and obtained the name of prophets, who foretold the coming of that seed of the woman, who was to bruise the head of the serpent; to be a blessing to all nations; and to redeem Israel out of all his troubles; much more was he entitled to it who, being himself that blessed

* 2 Pet. i. 21. † Luke xxiv. 19.

‡ Isai. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18, 19, 21.

blest seed, came to bless the world, and redeem his people, by declaring that all the glorious prophecies which had gone before of him, were then in the act of being fulfilled in his own person. It was to prepare the way for the coming of this great Prophet—that he might be known and revered when he *did* come—that all the preceding prophets had been sent. To preach deliverance to the captives of Satan—to proclaim the grand jubilee of rest and freedom from the servitude of sin, and to effect it, was his great business. To this he was “anointed” of God “with the Holy Ghost and with power.”*

The power of working miracles and foretelling future events, I said, were necessary to procure credit to a prophet, and ascertain his divine mission. This power Jesus possessed in a more eminent degree, than all the prophets who went before him. They wrought miracles by a power infused into them by God. He wrought his miracles by his own divine energy, in consequence of his union with the Father, whose prophet he was. And though he always ascribed his doctrines and miracles to the Father, and to the Holy Ghost residing in him;† yet, he both taught, and wrought his miracles in his own name. Being himself God, in union with the Father, the power of the Godhead resided in him: Being the Christ, God and man united, he was *anointed*, that is consecrated, set apart and sent by the Father to be his prophet, and to declare his will. So that it is strictly true, that he taught in his own name, and wrought miracles by his own power, and yet did nothing but as the Father gave him commandment.‡

It does not appear that Christ did any miracles, or delivered any doctrines, till after his baptism, when

* Acts x. 38. † Matt. xii. 28. John v. 36. and vii. 16.

‡ John xiv. 31.

when the Holy Ghost, in a bodily shape like a dove, descended and abode upon him;* “And a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art my beloved Son, in thee I am well pleased.” This was his anointing or consecration: and, by the power of the Spirit which he then received, he was led into the wilderness to endure the temptations of the *evil one*—the adversary of God and man. Having proved himself victorious over all the attempts of the grand deceiver, who had beguiled Adam and all his descendants, he began to proclaim the gospel of peace and reconciliation with God—calling men to renounce their subjection to Satan, and to fight against him; saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven”—the kingdom of the Redeemer—“is at hand”—Behold, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel”—“deliverance to the captives—recovery of sight to the blind—the acceptable year of the Lord.”†

That Jesus was thus anointed to his office, appears not only from the above cited passage, and from the testimony of St. Peter, who, in his address to Cornelius and his company, says—“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost, and with power;”‡ but also from the names by which he is called—*Messiah*, and *Christ*; both of which signify, *Anointed*.

From the Old Testament we know, that the ceremony of anointing with oil was in common use, to denote an appointment from God to the office of King, Priest, and Prophet. Saul, David, and Solomon, were anointed to be kings over Israel.§ Aaron and his sons to be the priests of God, under the Mosaic œconomy.|| And Elijah was command-
ed

* Luke iii. 22. John i. 32. † Luke iv. 18, 19. ‡ Acts x. 38.

§ 1 Sam. x. 1. 2 Sam. v. 3. 1 Kings i. 39.

|| Lev. viii. 12. Numb. iii. 9.

ed to anoint Elisha the son of Shaphat to be prophet in his room.* The holy oil, or ointment for this purpose was, by the express command of God, compounded of the richest spices,† and kept in the Tabernacle, to be used by the children of Israel, throughout their generations. This anointing was emblematical of those gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, which were conferred on those who filled any office of God's appointment; and is therefore called, "the oil of gladness," or exaltation; because they who were thus consecrated, were exalted above their equals, and were made to be glad or rejoice in the favour of God. In this sense is the phrase used of Messiah,‡ and applied to him by St. Paul.§ In after times, they who were advanced to any office of divine appointment, were said to be *anointed* to it, though no material oil had been used. This seems to have been the case with our blessed Saviour—the unction of the Holy Ghost superseding the use of all figurative applications. At length, the *anointing* came to signify the graces, or presence of the Holy Spirit; and in this sense it is probably used by St. John—"The anointing," that is, the Holy Spirit which ye have received "teacheth you all things."||

2. As Christ was sent by the Father to be his Prophet, to make known his will; and was for that purpose anointed with the Holy Ghost and with power; so he was sent by the Father to be his Priest, to make effectual atonement for sin, to proclaim its remission, to declare the terms on which, and to appoint the means by which, it should be forgiven—and, by working all kinds of miracles, to prove his divine mission, and give assurance unto all men of the efficacy of his atonement, and
of

* 1 Kings xix. 16.

† Exod. xxx. 23, 30, 31.

‡ Ps. xlv. 7.

§ Heb. i. 9.

|| John xi. 27.

of the means of the forgiveness of sins by him appointed. Of this there can be no doubt, if we will attend to what St. Paul has said of Christ's priesthood, in his Epistle to the Hebrews.*

The peculiarity of the priests office consists principally in two things—making atonement for sin, and interceding with God for the people. The atonement for sin, made by Christ offering himself a willing victim to divine justice for the sin of the world, and by actually enduring the wrath of God in his agony in the garden, and in the torments of crucifixion, both made more bitter by the dereliction of his Father. Isaiah foretold that the soul, or life, of Messiah should be made “an offering for sin.”† St. Paul affirms that God “hath made him,” Christ, “sin,” that is a sin offering, “for us.”‡ And St. Peter asserts, that Christ “his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree.”§ These authorities fully justify the church in teaching, and us in believing, that, by his passion and death, Christ made “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.”||

All those places of scripture which mention Christ as the atonement and propitiation for sin, or as our advocate and intercessor in heaven, stand on the ground of his priesthood; because, to make atonement and intercession are peculiar to the priests office. And that Christ was sent by the Father to make this atonement, appears from all those places, where he says, “he was sent by the Father,”¶—
that

* See Jones's four Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews, annexed to his Lectures, *On the Figurative Language of the Holy Scriptures*—a book which the author takes this opportunity to recommend to the careful reading of every person, who wishes to acquire a true knowledge and interpretation of Holy Scripture.

† Ch. liii. 10. ‡ 2 Cor. v. 21. § 1 Pet. ii. 24.

|| Prayer at the consecration of the Holy Eucharist.

¶ John v. 36.

that he "was to lay down his life for his sheep,* to give his flesh for the life of the world,† to give his life a ransom for many,‡ and that the Father had given him commandment to lay down his life and to take it again."§ He was therefore sent of God to be his priest, to make atonement for sin, and to intercede for his people. Of his intercession we have a clear instance in St. John's Gospel,|| where he prays and intercedes with the Father, for his apostles, and for all who should believe on him through their ministry. But as he was not to continue always on earth, the scene of his intercession is heaven: For, "when he had by himself purged our sins," he "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High."¶ And herein consists the unchangeableness of Christ's priesthood, and his ability to "save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."**

3. Another capacity, in which Christ was sent by the Father, was to be governor, head, and king of his church. It will be superfluous to cite many authorities to prove that this office belongs to Messiah. So express and strong are the declarations of the prophets to this purpose, that the carnal Jews were led to expect a temporal deliverer in Messiah; and under the influence of that vain Imagination, to reject, with scorn, him whom God "exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins."††

As a prophet, Christ came to make known the will of God, to call and gather his church, and to separate it from the world.‡‡ This church

VOL. I.

I

is

* Ch. x. 15. † Ch. vi. 51. ‡ Matt. xx. 28. § John x. 18.

|| Ch. xvii.

¶ Heb. i. 3.

** Heb. vii. 24, 25.

†† Acts v. 31.

‡‡ John xvii. 14.

is always described as a society or community. It is styled the body of Christ.* It is called the kingdom of heaven—the kingdom of God.† If the church be a society, it must have a governor: If a body, it must have a head: If Christ's body, its head must be Christ: If a kingdom, a king must reign over it. Accordingly, the predictions of the prophets which describe Messiah as a king, prince, ruler, or governor, are in the New Testament applied to Jesus Christ. That the power and majesty of Messiah are, under the figure of David, represented in the second Psalm, appears by the citations made from it by the apostle, and applied to Christ.‡ The same observation will hold good of several other psalms, particularly the forty-fifth.§ This prophecy of Jeremiah||—"Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS," can be applied to none but Messiah; and to him it is applied, either directly, or by allusion, in several places of the New Testament.¶ Indeed, the apostles always speak of Christ with reference to his church, as of its head, and of his being given of God for that office. God, saith St. Paul, "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body.** The same apostle, writing to the Ephesians, exhorts them to unity and sincerity, from this motive—that they might "grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."†† And, in

* Col. i. 24.

† Matt. iii. 2. xii. 28.

‡ Acts iv. 25. xiii. 23. Heb. i. 5. v. 5. § Heb. i. 8. ii. 12.

|| Ch. xxiii. 5, 6.

¶ Luke xxiv. 27. 1 Cor. i. 30.

** Eph. i. 22, 23.

†† Eph. iv. 15.

in another Epistle, he asserts of Christ, in direct terms, that "he is the head of the body, the church."

That Christ is the king, ruler, or governor of the church, appears from all those places which ascribe supremacy of power to him, and describe him as a Prince and Lord.† This also follows from his being head of the church, and the church being his body. These expressions, being metaphysically taken from the natural body, imply, that the church is directed and governed by Christ its head, even as *that* is directed and governed by the natural head.

Having thus ascertained the manner in which, and the purposes for which, Christ was sent of the Father, we will turn our attention to his apostles, and endeavour to shew how, and for what purposes they were sent by Christ into the world. That there must be some great analogy, and striking resemblance between his mission from the Father, and theirs from him, is certain from his own words—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Christ declares the same thing in another place, namely, in that pathetic intercession which St. John testifies‡ he made for his apostles, and for his whole church, most probably at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, when, under the figure of bread and wine, he offered and devoted his body and blood—his life—a sacrifice to God for the sin of the world—"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world."

I. Christ was sent by the Father to be his prophet, to declare his will, to publish the terms of pardon and reconciliation with God, to call and gather his church, and separate it from the world, and to work all miracles necessary to establish the divine

* Col. i. 18. † Acts v. 31. ii. 36. x. 36. ‡ Ch. xvii. 18.

divine authority of his mission. And the apostles were sent by Christ to be *his* prophets, even as he was the Father's prophet—to make known his will, as he made known the will of the Father. For, the Father having constituted him head over all things, during the continuance of his mediatorial kingdom; his will is the supreme authority, by which all things are to be ordered and governed, to the end of the world.* The apostles were also sent to make known the terms of reconciliation with God, and to persuade men to be reconciled to him†—to collect Christ's church from the world; and, by baptism, to admit all those into it who should believe in him—and to instruct them in *its* nature and *their* duty‡—to work all miracles in proof of their divine mission—and to be witnesses to the world of what their Lord and Master had said and done,§ particularly of his resurrection, the great miracle on which his divine mission and authority depend, and by which he hath given to the world assurance of life and immortality.

See, now, whether all this be not fairly included in the commission and directions which Christ gave to his apostles. “Go ye, and teach|| all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.”¶ To this commission, in St. Mark's Gospel, this promise is subjoined—“These signs shall follow them that believe: In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and, if they drink any deadly

* 1 Cor. xv. 24, 27. † 2 Cor. v. 20. ‡ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

§ Luke xxiv. 48.

|| The Greek word signifies also, to be a disciple or hearer—to be admitted as a scholar to be taught; and that is undoubtedly its meaning in this place.

¶ Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.”* And that they were to be witnesses of what Christ did and taught—particularly of his resurrection—is evident from Christ’s discourse to his apostles, a little before his ascension—“Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and, that repentance and remission of sins should be preached, in his name, among all nations—And ye are witnesses of these things.”†

It would be easy to prove from the conduct of the apostles, that they understood their Lord in the sense which I have given of his directions. For though their national prejudices did, for a time, prevent their extending the knowledge of salvation through Christ, to any but Jews, yet these prejudices were at length overcome; and they did go among all nations and preach the gospel, declaring remission of sins and eternal life, through Christ, to all who would hear them; they did bear witness to the truth and reality of his resurrection; they did admit those who believed into his church by baptism, and instruct them in all the duties of the christian life—“teaching them to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded.” And whenever they were questioned upon the matter, they always pleaded his authority and direction, as the ground and reason of their conduct. It ought also to be remarked, that as Christ declared he “came not to do his own will, but the will of him that sent him;”‡ so the apostles declared, that they followed not their own will and inventions, but the directions of him who sent them, and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost,

* Ch. xvi. 17, 18.

† Luke xxiv. 46, 47, 48. See also Acts i. 8. ii. 32. v. 32.

‡ John vi. 38.

Ghost, whom he had given to be with them. "We," saith St. Paul, "preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus;"* and he affirms that his "preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit, and of power."†

2. Christ was anointed of the Father and sent to be his Priest—to make atonement for sin by "once offering himself" a sacrifice for it,‡ and to intercede for his people. And the apostles were sent to be Christ's priests to his church, to offer the commemorative sacrifice of the atonement which he had made; and to intercede with him, and, in his name, and through his merit, with the Father for his people. This they did every time they celebrated the holy Communion; which probably was, every time they assembled for christian worship; the phrase for which, in the New Testament, seems to be, *Coming, or meeting together to break bread.*§ That at this celebration, prayers and intercessions were made for the whole church of Christ, by the first christians, must be known to every person moderately acquainted with christian antiquities. Probably, St. Paul refers to this practice, when he directs the Church of Ephesus to make "supplications for all saints;"|| and enjoins it on Timothy, "that supplications, and prayers, and intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men: for kings, and for all that are in authority."¶

The

* 2 Cor. iv. 5. † 1 Cor. ii. 4. ‡ Heb. vii. 27. x. 10.

§ Acts ii. 42, 46. xx. 7. || Eph. vi. 18.

¶ 1 Tim. ii. 1, 2. The Greek word for *giving of thanks*, is that by which the primitive Christians called the holy Communion, viz. Eucharist; and the verb is used by St. Luke to express our Redeemer's consecrating the bread, at its institution. But I here drop this subject, as it is fully considered in the discourse on the Eucharist; as is also the subject of the next paragraph, viz. the *Christian altar*.

The title of *Higb-Priest*, which is so frequently applied to Christ by St. Paul, implies a lower order of priests in his church, who are subject to him, and act by his authority and direction. The term is undoubtedly taken from the gradation of the priesthood in the family of Aaron. And as the whole law, and all the institutions of Moses, were typical of Christ and his church, the Aaronical priesthood must have been typical of the christian. And the relative terms of *priest* and *higb-priest* are just as compatible, in the Christian, as they were in the Jewish church, and the latter as necessarily implies the former. Besides;

Christ speaks of an *altar* in his church, and cautions us, if we bring our gift to the altar, not to offer it, while we are at variance with our brother, but first to go and be reconciled to him.* And St. Paul says, "We," christians "have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat, which serve the tabernacle."† Now, where there is an altar, there must be a sacrifice, and a priest to offer it. And as Christ's apostles were, at its institution, authorised by him to offer the christian sacrifice of bread and wine, no doubt can remain of their being the priests of the christian church, in the most proper sense.

3. Christ was sent by the Father to be the king, head, or governor of his church; consequently he had authority to institute its government, appoint its officers, and settle its œconomy. That Christ did delegate a similar power to his apostles is evident, not only from his declaration to them—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," but from his promise to them—"Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of

* Matt. v. 23, 24.

† Heb. xiii. 10.

of Israel :”* And also from his commanding them to admit men into his church by baptism, which is in itself an instance of government. The power of *loosing* and *binding* which Christ first gave to St. Peter, in consequence of his noble and ready declaration—“Thou art Christ the Son of the living God;”† and afterward to all his apostles,‡ though it may be thought to relate more particularly to the priesthood, yet evidently contains in it the powers of government—authority to admit members into the church, to censure the disorderly, and to cast out refractory delinquents from it: *now ye see*

If we attend to the conduct of the apostles, after our Lord’s ascension, and the descent of the Holy Ghost on them, we shall find that they did exercise all the powers of government in those churches which they planted, till age or distance rendered their occasional visits impracticable; and then, successors were by them appointed to take the charge and oversight of them. Thus Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, were, by St. Paul, appointed apostles of those churches, when he could no longer superintend them. Ancient tradition and history inform us, that the same thing was done in many other places; so that immediately after the death of the first apostles, all the considerable churches had apostolic men, under the stile of Bishops, presiding in them; and, for some centuries after, the Christian Bishops proved their succession from the apostles, and their unity with the Catholic Church, by tracing their episcopacy up to *them*, or to some church founded by them. But, till the apostles resigned their charge, they exercised the full powers of government—they admitted men into the church, either personally, or by the

* Matt. xix. 28. Luke xxii. 30.

† Matt. xvi. 16, 19.

‡ Ch. xviii. 18.

the ministry of the subordinate clergy, who acted by authority from them—they directed the conduct of both clergy and laity, and for obstinacy in disorderly conduct, turned them out to the world.*

Thus it appears from the commission and declarations of Christ, and from the conduct of the apostles, that they were delegated by him, to be chief governors in his church. The position, therefore, that the apostles were sent by Christ to be his prophets, priests, and governors, in his church, is fully established—*As his Father sent him, even so sent he them.*—We will now consider,

II. The meaning of Christ's *breathing* on his apostles, and saying to them—"Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

From what was said of the appointment of Christ to the offices he sustained, namely, that it was by the descent and abode of the Holy Ghost on him, and the voice which came from heaven—"Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased"—it will appear, that his breathing on his apostles, and saying—"Receive ye the Holy Ghost," was intended to express and convey that presence of the Holy Spirit, which was necessary to the appointment they received, when he said to them—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." It was their unction, or anointing to their office. He received his appointment, by unction of the Holy Ghost, immediately from the Almighty Father: They received their appointment, by unction of the Holy Ghost, immediately from him, and mediately, through him, from the Father. But it was the unction of office only.

A commission, or appointment to an office, and ability to execute it effectually, and credentials to prove its authenticity, are different things, and, in

VOL. I.

K

the

* Acts xx. 28. 1 Cor. v. 5.

the case before us, required different gifts and qualifications. God is the God of order, and confers his gifts in such order and degree, as he sees most proper to produce the effect proposed. When Christ *breathed* on his apostles, they received that anointing of the Holy Ghost which was necessary to constitute them witnesses of Christ to the world, preachers of his gospel, priests and governors of his church. But to enable them to execute this commission, or fulfil this appointment effectually, something further was necessary.

They were to be witnesses for Christ, of all that he had done and taught from the beginning.* But how could they be effectual witnesses of those things, unless they had a perfect remembrance of them all? Human memory is frail, and could not retain such a variety of incidents and circumstances, discourses and transactions, as must have happened, while they accompanied with Jesus. Nothing but the divine omniscience could remove this difficulty; and this resource they had in the Comforter—the Holy Ghost—whom the Father had promised to send in Christ's name—"He," said Christ, "shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."†

Another thing necessary to the effectual execution of their commission was, ability to produce proper credentials of their divine mission—to give proof to the world that they really had received such an appointment as they claimed; and that the doctrines they taught, and the facts they affirmed, in consequence of it, were true and real. Miraculous powers, and they only, were sufficient proof in such a case; and till the apostles possessed them, they were not qualified to execute their commission with full effect. On these accounts, they were directed

* Luke xxiv. 48. John xv. 27. Acts i. 8. † John xiv. 26.

rected by Christ to tarry at Jerusalem, and not enter on their office, till he should send "the promise of the Father on them,"* and they should "be endued with power from on high,"—that is, from heaven. This promise of the Father, this power from on high, came upon them on the day of Pentecost, ten days after they had received their appointment—when the Holy Ghost, as a rushing mighty wind, filled the house where they were sitting, and, in the form of cloven tongues of fire, sat upon each of them.†—Then were they filled with the Holy Ghost, and duly qualified for their office, by the perfect remembrance of every thing Christ had said and done, by the ability to speak all languages, and the power of doing all miracles—and then, and not till then, they began their public ministry, by St. Peter's preaching the first apostolical sermon to the multitude who ran together on that extraordinary occasion.‡

From

* Though the Greek verb be in the present tense, and be rightly rendered, "Behold, I send," yet I conceive it has only a future meaning. That the future is sometimes expressed by the present, appears from the promise of Christ to his apostles—"Lo, I *am* with you alway even unto the end of the world." *Mat. xxviii. 20.* To comfort his apostles under that sadness which oppressed them at the thoughts of his departure, Christ addresses them in these words: "I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." *John xvi. 7.* That the gift of the Holy Ghost was the consequence of Christ's ascension, we learn also from St. Paul, who applies to him the prophecy of David, *Pf. lxviii. 18.* "When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." *Eph. iv. 8.* And St. John, in his Gospel, assigns this reason why "the Holy Ghost was not yet given, namely, because Jesus was not yet glorified." *Ch. vii. 39.* From all which, I conclude, that though the words, "Behold, I send the promise of my Father on you," be expressed in the present time, they have only a future meaning, and relate to the effusion of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost.

† Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, &c. ‡ Ver. 14, &c.

From what has been said, it will follow, that miraculous powers were no part of the apostolical commission. They were necessary for the first apostles to prove the divine original of their commission; and when that was done, their necessity ceased, and they were gradually withdrawn—for why should they be continued, when the end for which they were given was answered, and no longer subsisted? Besides, miraculous powers were not peculiar to the first apostles, though they were to the first ages of the christian church. And it appears from St. Mark, that Christ sufficiently guarded his apostles against the imagination that they should exclusively possess them—"He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved;—and these signs shall follow them that believe: In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover."* Let it be remarked, that here the promise of miraculous powers was future, and common to all the first christians: but the gift of the Holy Ghost, when the apostles received their commission, was present, and peculiar to them. The apostolical commission, therefore, and miraculous powers, are different gifts of the Spirit, and, as was before observed, given for different purposes—the first being the gift of office, the second the gift of power to prove, and of qualification to execute, the office effectually. Further—

From the apostolical writings we know, that Christ's promise to those who should believe was strictly fulfilled; and that, if miraculous powers were not common to all christians, they were yet possessed by many in the various congregations.†

To

* Mark xvi. 16, 17, 18.

† 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.

To this it may be added, that from comparing circumstances together, an inquirer would be apt to conclude, that not only the apostles, but all the disciples at Jerusalem, visibly received the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost. We are told that the whole number of disciples, men and women, was about an hundred and twenty*—that on the day of Pentecost, they were all, with one accord, in one place—that the cloven fiery tongues sat on *each* of them, and that they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost. And St. Peter, in his sermon on the occasion, tells the multitude, that in that event a remarkable prophecy of Joel was fulfilled—"It shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants, and on my hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my Spirit, and they shall prophecy."† Now, unless the influence of the Holy Ghost, at this time, was on the women, as well as men, I see not how the prophecy of Joel was then fulfilled: But surely it did not make them all apostles.

The establishing of this point, that the gift of the Holy Ghost when Christ breathed on his apostles, and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," was a gift of office or appointment only, and not of miraculous powers also, will freely justify the Church in retaining those words of Christ, in the ordination of Priests. They hold a very considerable part of the apostolical office, at least as far as the priesthood and subordination of government in the church are concerned. The words are official, and used in the sense in which Christ used them—as denoting appointment to the office of ministering in his

* Acts i. 15.

† Acts ii. 17, 18. Joel ii. 28, 29.

his church as “stewards of the mysteries of God,”* by presiding in the public worship, instructing the people and interceding for them, offering the christian sacrifice, and assisting the Bishop in the government of the church. That other words would better serve the purpose may be reasonably doubted; as the presumption is, that Christ knew better what words were proper for the occasion, than they do who find fault with them.

The only remaining part of this inquiry is to give an account of the meaning of that action of Christ, when he gave their commission to his apostles, namely, His *breathing* on them.

That the influences of the Spirit of God are, in scripture, commonly represented by *breathing*, by inspiration—a word of the same meaning—by air in motion, or wind, must have been observed by every careful reader. When God enlivened the inanimate body of Adam with a living soul—and, in the opinion of some eminent divines, both of ancient and modern times, with his own most Holy Spirit—he *breathed* into his nostrils the *breath of lives*.† When he reduced the chaos of this world into order, the *wind* or *spirit* of God moved on the face of the waters.‡ On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost descended as a rushing mighty *wind*. It is only by analogy with things natural, that we can form any notion of spiritual things—To give Nicodemus some idea of the operation of the Holy Ghost, in our second birth, Christ illustrates his influence by the blowing of the wind.§ “There is a spirit in man, said Elihu, and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth him understanding”||—informing us what it is in man that giveth him understanding—the *Spirit* of God—and how we obtain

* 1 Cor. iv. 1.

† Gen. ii. 7.

‡ Gen. i. 2.

§ John iii. 8.

|| Job xxxii. 8.

tain it—by the *inspiration* of the Almighty. We learn the same from St. Paul, who says—All scripture is given by inspiration, or the breathing, of God.*

Christ's *breathing* on his apostles was, therefore, a significant action, and expressive of the presence of the Holy Ghost, whom he then conferred on them, to anoint them to the apostolic office, which he at that time committed to them.

* 2 Tim. iii. 16.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE II.

PART II.

III. **T**HE third thing, into which it was proposed to inquire was, the meaning of those words of the text, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."

Whether these words be considered as part of the commission, at this time, given by Christ to his apostles, or only declarative of the powers contained in it, the consequence will be the same. They certainly have reference to what he said previously to his breathing on them—"As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." We have seen in what manner the Father sent him, namely, by anointing him with the Holy Ghost. The end too for which he was sent, has been shewn to have been—to call men to repentance—to make atonement for sin, and to declare the remission of it. It was to give the greater efficacy to the doctrine of repentance, and to render it the more certainly effectual to the obtaining of that forgiveness of sins, which is to be had through his atonement, that he instituted his Church, consisting of all those who should believe in him, separated it from the world,* and put it under a certain œconomy and discipline. When his work was done, he was to return to his Father, and take possession of his mediatorial kingdom, and govern all things relating to this world till the end

of

* John xvii. 14.

of it,* when he was to return again in power and great glory,—no longer as Mediator, but as Judge, to pronounce and execute the righteous sentence of the Father,† awarding to every man the just recompence of his deeds. It therefore became necessary, that during his absence, some persons should be appointed to preside in his church—to see that the doctrines of atonement and remission of sins through him were fully preached, and men thereby brought to place their faith and confidence in him; and that its discipline was duly administered, according as he should command; that so, repentance and holiness might be enforced on all his servants, and made effectual to the obtaining of eternal life, through his mediation. To this station he appointed his Holy Apostles; and, at his taking leave of them, when he was about to ascend to his Father, he gave them their commission, which they were to execute agreeably to such regulations, as he had previously made; and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, whom he promised to send on them. Breathing on them, he said, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost”—“By the unction, or appointment, of the Holy Spirit of the Father, be ye my representatives, or superintendents in my church; and as such”—“whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

The business is to ascertain, what the power was, which was then given to the apostles; for to them only were the words spoken. To do this, it will be proper to compare this passage with similar expressions of the scripture, and see what light they will throw on it. There are but two places which seem capable of this comparison. They are both in St. Matthew's Gospel; and though not exactly parallel

VOL. I.

L

to

* 1 Cor. xv. 27. Eph. i. 20, 21, 22. † Acts x. 42, and xvii. 31.

to this, being spoken at different times and on different occasions, yet they manifestly relate to the same subject—the discipline of the christian church. If we can hit upon a sense in which they shall all agree, it will very probably be the right one, especially if there be no other sense which will so well comport with them.

The first of these passages, if we keep ourselves clear of attachment to systems previously adopted, will, I apprehend, admit of an easy solution. For reasons best known to his own wisdom, probably to lead his disciples to a true knowledge of his person and offices, Jesus asked them, “Whom do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” They answered, “Some say that thou art John the Baptist, some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets,” whom some of the Jews supposed to have risen from the dead, and come again to visit their nation. Continuing his inquiry, he asked again, “But whom say ye that I am?” Simon Peter, animated by the Spirit of God, answered, “Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God.” “Blessed,” said Jesus, “art thou Simon; for flesh and blood,” no power of nature, “hath revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say unto thee, that thou art Peter”—a rock—“and upon this rock”—on thee, as one of the foundation stones*—“I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”†

The use of keys being to open and shut, they must, in figurative language, be the emblem of
power

* 1 Cor. iii. 9, 10. Eph. ii. 20. Rev. xxi. 14.

† Matt. xvi. 13—19.

power and government; for he who has the power of opening and shutting a house, that is, of admitting into it, and excluding from it, has undoubtedly the government of that house. In this sense the word is used in Isaiah—Speaking of Eliakim, God says, “The key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”* Was there any doubt whether this meant, that Eliakim should be king of Judah, and sit on the throne of David, the previous verse will remove it—“I will commit thy government into his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah.” In the Revelation of St. John, this prophecy is applied to Christ, “These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.”† There can therefore be no doubt, but that by the keys of the kingdom of heaven which Christ promised to Peter, was meant the government of his church. This being ascertained, it must be supposed that the words following that promise, “Whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven,” must relate to the use of the keys—the government of the church, and must mean, whatever act of authority thou shalt duly execute in my church, in consequence of that power which shall be committed to thee, shall be ratified in heaven—God will confirm it.

Thus understood, the promise here made to St. Peter, perfectly accords with the power which Christ, in the text, gave to all the apostles: so that this transaction recorded by St. John is the fulfilling of the promise made to St. Peter, and recorded by St. Matthew.

* Isa. xxii. 22.

† Ch. iii. 7.

Matthew. For the Greek words translated *to bind*, and *to retain*, *to loose*, and *to remit*, have little or no difference between them. Those used by St. Matthew apply more properly to *crimes* or *offences*, those by St. John to the *persons* offending. To *bind* their offences on men, so that they shall not escape from them, and to *retain* their sins, is just the same, and means that their sins are left unforgiven; and they, of course, must abide the consequence of such penalty as the law inflicts on such offences.—And to *loose* crimes from off offenders, is the same with *remitting* their sins, and means their being freed from the penalty which the law had denounced against them.*

The Church of Rome, therefore, can have no warrant to infer the supremacy of the Pope, as successor, or vicar of St. Peter, from this passage in St. Matthew. No power is by it given to St. Peter, but only a promise made, that such power should be conferred on him. Either then that power was given to him at the time mentioned in the text, or it does not appear that the promise of Christ was ever fulfilled. That Christ's promise was fulfilled, there can be no doubt—all his promises are yea and amen. Therefore the promise was made good to him, when Christ said to his apostles, "Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." But the power then given was common to all the apostles, and Peter could claim no supremacy in consequence of it.

Should

* Any person who wishes to become critically acquainted with this subject, will find his pains amply repaid, by reading Dr. Hammond's tract, *Of the Power of the Keys*, &c. vol. i. of the folio edition of his works. Indeed, no time can be better employed than in reading the discourses and tracts of that great man, eminent for his learning and judgment as a critic, and for his soundness and piety as a divine.

Should it be asked, whether the promise implied no privilege to be given to St. Peter, but what was common to all the apostles? I answer, none of supremacy. The promise of the keys was first made to *him*, in consequence of his ready faith in, and noble confession of Christ. And God's providence so ordered it, that he was the *first* of the apostles who used the keys of the kingdom of heaven. He *first* proposed, and then conducted the business of appointing a successor in the apostleship to the traitor Judas*—He *first* opened the kingdom of heaven to the Jews, by his sermon on the day of Pentecost, converting about three thousand of them; who were admitted into the church by baptism, and “continued stedfastly in the apostles doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.”† And he *first* unbarred the door of Christ's Church to the Gentiles, by the conversion of Cornelius the Roman, and the company assembled at his house; and by adopting them into Christ's family by the baptism of regeneration.‡ He too *first* inflicted censure on offenders, namely, on Ananias and Sapphira, who were Jews, and on Simon the Samaritan.§

The other place in St. Matthew which claims our attention, as being coincident with the one we have already considered, and with the text, stands thus:—“If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between him and thee alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee

* Acts i. 15, &c. † Ch. ii. 41, 42. ‡ Ch. x. 44, 48.
§ Ch. v. 3—10, and viii. 20, 21.

thee as a heathen man and a publican. Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven.”*

There can, I think, be but two difficulties in this passage; one is, to determine to whom this power of *loosing* and *binding* is given; the other is, to ascertain in what sense the word *church* is here used: unless it should be thought that the phrase, *heathen man and publican*, has some obscurity in it. But that, I trust, will vanish when the meaning of “the church” is fixed. And I cannot but hope, that if we consider the matter with proper candor, every appearance of difficulty will vanish with it.

With regard to the first difficulty—to whom the power of binding and loosing is given. When it is considered, that the beginning of the chapter informs us, that the “disciples came to Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”—that this question gave occasion to his subsequent discourse concerning offences, to which that which now engages our attention is annexed—of which indeed it is a part: and that there is not the least intimation of a change of audience through the whole of it; it must appear evident, that as the whole discourse is addressed to his disciples—the twelve who are particularly distinguished as such—so the power of binding and loosing could be promised to none but them. Besides; it has been shewn, that loosing and binding are acts of government, and imply the power of the keys. Now the power of the keys was promised to the twelve only; and therefore to them only was given the power of binding and loosing.

The other difficulty is to ascertain the meaning of the word *church* in this place. Instead of, “tell
it

* Matt. xviii. 15—18.

it to the church," suppose the direction had been, *tell it to the state*—to whom would a man think he was to enter his complaint? to every member diffusively? or to all the members collectively? or to the governors of it? Most certainly to these last, because they only have power to take cognizance of crimes. Why then, when Christ directs, that in case the offending brother prove refractory, the person injured should *tell it*—make his complaint—*to the church*, should we not understand him of the governors of the church? But who *are* the governors of the church? They only whom Christ has appointed to be so. In truth, all power of government in the church, wherever it be lodged, or however high its pretensions, which cannot be traced up to Christ for its origin, is mere usurpation.

The sense of the passage under consideration appears, therefore, to be this—'If thy christian brother do thee an injury, remonstrate with him by himself alone. If he hear thee, and amend his fault, be it thy comfort that thou hast recovered thy brother from his evil course, and *gained* him over to a due sense of his duty as a christian man. If he will not hear thee, admonish him before one or two christian brethren, that, by their interference, he may be made ashamed of his evil conduct, and brought to repentance; or that, if he prove refractory, there may be proper witnesses of his perverse obstinacy. If this last be the issue, and he will not regard them, complain to the governors of the church, and prove thy complaint by the witnesses thou hast provided. If he refuse to abide by their decision, let him be expelled from the church, and turned out to the world, to which he properly belongs; and then, regard him no longer as a christian, but treat him as a heathen man and a publican are treated by your countrymen. And I assure you, that

that the sentence which, in virtue of the authority I shall give you, shall, in such cases, be duly pronounced by the governors of the church, will be ratified by God himself.

I trust, I have given a fair interpretation of these two places in St. Matthew; and, if I have, it cannot be doubted but that they relate to the same thing with the text, that is, the government and discipline of the christian church—the power of admitting members into it, of inflicting censures on them for their unchristian conduct, of absolving them from censure upon their penitence, and of finally turning them out to the world, for their obstinately persisting in their evil deeds. This authority was, on two different occasions, promised by Christ to his apostles; or spoken of as a power with which they should be invested, and was, at length, amply conferred on them by Christ, when he said to them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained.”

Let us now see in what cases this power could properly be exercised, that is, so as to answer the end proposed by it—the enforcing repentance and holiness of life on all the members of the christian church.

One case has been already particularly considered, namely, that of trespasses committed by one christian person against another. And certainly no method can be devised, which will so effectually restrain men from mutual injuries, and rancorous resentments, and keep them quiet and inoffensive members of the church, as that which Christ has directed, was it fully carried into execution. How many vexatious and ruinous law-suits would it prevent; and how strongly would it bind christians together “in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righte-

ousness

ousness of life!" God send the time, when the members of his church shall think less of gratifying their own wills and passions, and more of the obligations they are under to comply punctually with the directions of their Lord and Master.

Another instance of the exercise of the power of the keys is in Holy Baptism, the sacrament of our initiation into the family of Christ. The power of administering baptism was given by Christ to his apostles, when he said to them, "Go, and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."* In the administration of this sacrament, the "kingdom of heaven"—the church of Christ—is *opened* to the believer, and he is *loosed* from his sins—in the words of St. John, they are remitted unto him. For Christ has said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved."† If so, there must be forgiveness of sins in baptism, because without forgiveness there can be no salvation. Ananias, under the immediate influence and direction of the Holy Ghost, teacheth us the same thing in his address to Saul—"Arise, and be baptised, and *wash away thy sins.*"‡

And, as in the administration of baptism, the kingdom of heaven is opened to the believing penitent, and he is loosed from his sins; so, when a person is rejected from baptism, for want of the proper qualifications of faith and repentance, or for any just cause, the kingdom of heaven, the church of Christ, is shut against him—he is bound with the chain of his sins, and they are retained; that is, he is left in his natural state, a child of the world, and under the penalty of the wrath of God.

Another instance of the exercise of this power is the administration of the holy Eucharist. That the

VOL. I.

M

worthy

* Matt. xxviii. 19. † Mark xvi. 16. ‡ Acts xxii. 16.

worthy communicant obtains the forgiveness of sins, when he receives the body and blood of Christ in the celebration of those sacred mysteries, waving all other arguments, appears from this circumstance, that he is permitted by God's minister to eat of God's food, and at his table; and, therefore, must be at peace, and in friendship with him. But, without remission of sins, there can be no peace or friendship with God. On the contrary, when God's minister, for just and sufficient reasons, repels any one from the holy Communion, and puts him under the censure of the church, his sins are retained, and he is left in the bonds of his iniquity, till, by a due sense of his evil state, he is brought to repentance and amendment; obtains the benefit of absolution; and is restored to the company of the faithful. Then he is loosed from his sins—they are remitted unto him. And we have authority to say, that what God's minister does, in these and similar cases, justly, and in consequence of the authority which Christ has committed to him, shall be ratified in heaven.

More instances will be unnecessary. These, in the general terms in which I have mentioned them, are sufficient to give an idea of the nature and use of binding and loosing, remitting and retaining sins, which Christ gave to his apostles. And, it will appear from the view we have taken of it, that only open and known crimes and immoralities, such as disturb the peace of the church, and bring scandal on our holy religion, can be cognizable by the Governors of it. As to secret sins, they can be known only to him who searcheth the hearts, and he will give unto every one according to his works.* Exhortations to purity of heart and holiness of life, to constant penitence, and lively faith in the atonement

* Rev. ii. 23.

of the Redeemer, to a steady attention to the means of grace, with proper cautions against the danger of resting in them, without the inward sanctification of the heart; together with plain instructions in christian knowledge and virtue, are all that a christian minister can, in this respect, do for his flock: and, if he add the force of his own example, and become their pattern in holiness and piety, he fulfils his duty, and will receive the approbation of his Lord.

Having thus seen the powers which Christ left with his apostles, it will be proper, before an end be put to this discourse, to inquire, whether that power was occasional, to answer a present emergency, and then to cease; or whether it was to be of perpetual standing in the church? Some observations have already been made on the subject, but it deserves a more particular consideration. Repetitions will be unavoidable, but they cannot be long, and the candid inquirer after truth will bear with them.

It has been observed, that in some respects, namely, as they were witnesses of Christ's transactions, particularly of his resurrection—workers of miracles—writers of holy scripture—the apostles were extraordinary ministers, intended to serve an extraordinary purpose—to prove the divine original of the christian religion, and their own mission from God to propagate it in the world, and to leave directions in their writings, and an authentic example in their practice, for the future management of the church of Christ. In these respects, it is readily acknowledged, they could have no successors. But the church was to continue to the end of the world—Christ had promised, that even the gates of hell should not prevail against it. It was, therefore, necessary that there should be governors of its polity, preachers of its doctrines, administrators of its ordinances,

ordinances, and dispensers of its discipline, always subsisting in it; otherwise, it must have had an end soon after the decease of the original apostles. This is a strong presumption, that the apostolical office, as far as these ends required, was to have a permanent continuance in the church. And we shall find this presumption brought to a certainty, by attending to two things—the commission of Christ to his apostles—and their practice in consequence of it.

The commission is express—“As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.” Now, that the Father sent Christ to send others, is evident from this circumstance—that he *did* send others; for he did nothing but according to the will and commandment of the Father.* If, then, the Father sent Christ to send others, and Christ sent his apostles as his Father sent him, he sent *them* to send others. Their successors also must have had the same power of sending, and it was their duty to use it, as the exigences of the church should require. Thus the perpetual continuance of the apostolical power in the church would be secured by a perpetual succession of Governors in it with apostolical authority. Nor is there any other way by which the promise of Christ to his apostles, when he invested them with their commission, as it is related by St. Matthew, can be made good—“Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”† For the apostles being dead, if they have left no successors, or if the succession has failed, the promise of Christ has failed; and his church is now without governors, or preachers, or any to dispense its ordinances and discipline. For how can a man execute the office of a governor in his church, but by his appointment? Or how can he preach except he be sent?‡ Or administer either sacraments or discipline in

* John xiv. 31. † Matt. xxviii. 20. ‡ Rom. x. 15.

in the church of God, but by the appointment of God?

It has been observed, that the conduct of the apostles is a good comment on the commission which they received from Christ—at least, it shews how they understood it. To their conduct then let us attend—

Immediately after Christ's ascension, and probably the same day, they filled up the vacancy which the apostacy of the traitor Judas had made in their number, by choosing Matthias into his room; and, saith their history, "He was numbered with the eleven apostles"*—and undoubtedly enjoyed the full power and authority of an apostle, though he was not appointed immediately by Christ, as the eleven were, but mediately by their ministry. Now, had they understood their commission to be personal, and to continue no longer than they should live, their conduct must appear altogether unaccountable. It could not proceed from a supposed necessity of keeping the number twelve complete, for they did not confine themselves to that number. I say nothing of St. Paul, because his appointment being extraordinary, immediately from heaven, does not come under our present consideration. But we find Barnabas among the apostles, and generally taking rank of St. Paul, by being mentioned before him in the history of their acts. The time of his appointment to the Apostolical Office does not appear. The first account we have of his acting as an apostle is, when he was sent from Jerusalem to Antioch, to confirm the new converts to Christianity, which had been made from Gentilism, by some Evangelists of Cyprus and Cyrene, who had been driven from Jerusalem by the persecution that raged there immediately after the martyrdom of St. Stephen.

* Acts i. 26.

Stephen.* But the apostleship of St. Barnabas does not rest on evidence merely circumstantial—He is expressly called an Apostle in the same history, and named as such before St. Paul.† The same observation may be made here, which was made respecting St. Matthias—If the apostles understood their commission to have been personal, no tolerable account can be given of the propriety of their conduct in admitting St. Barnabas into their number.

Though St. Paul's appointment to the apostleship was extraordinary, and cannot be taken into account, yet his conduct in his office comes fairly before us. He says of himself that, in preaching the gospel, he “laboured more abundantly than” all the other apostles.‡ The history of the Acts of the Apostles has certainly transmitted to us a fuller account of his labours, than of all the rest. His conduct, therefore, becomes the proper object of our inquiry.

In the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, we have an account of the travels of Barnabas and Paul to preach the gospel, through Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, &c. We have there this remark, “When they had ordained them *Elders*—in the Greek, *Presbyters*—in every church, and had prayed with fasting,” &c. I stop not here to settle the meaning of the word *Elders* or *Presbyters*: It is enough for my present purpose, that Barnabas and Paul did ordain ministers of some rank or other to preside and officiate in the churches or congregations which they had planted. It furnishes a strong probability that they did so in all the congregations which they gathered. That it was done by St. Paul at Ephesus, the history furnishes unquestionable proof. When he first visited that city, he found only twelve disciples

* Acts xi. 22.

† Ch. xiv. 14.

‡ Acts xv. 10.

ciples in it: They could not be called christians, for they had not been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus. Finding, however, the prospect of success in planting the gospel there great, he continued two years, preaching in the Jewish synagogue, till they became obstinate; and then, assembling the disciples in the school of Tyrannus: "So that all they which dwelt in Asia, heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks."* We cannot suppose that St. Paul's zeal and industry would have permitted him to continue so long in one city, had not the harvest been plenteous. That it was so, we have this proof—Going the last time to Jerusalem, and travelling by sea, it became inconvenient for him to go out of his way to Ephesus; but, stopping at Miletus, he called the elders—presbyters—of the church to him.† He calls them *Overseers*—in the Greek, *Bishops*—of the Church of God; and says, they were made so by the Holy Ghost—that is, by the anointing of the Holy Ghost which they received at their ordination, or appointment to their ministry. They had, therefore, received some part at least of the apostolical commission, most probably from St. Paul's hands; for we do not read of any other apostle having then visited the Church of Ephesus. But if St. Paul had supposed that the apostolical authority was to cease with the lives of the apostles, he could not have acted so absurdly as to impart the whole, or any share of it, to others—it would have been contrary to the will of Christ; and to say in such a case that they were appointed by the Holy Ghost, would have been no small degree of blasphemy. It may also be asked; In what good sense a man can impart a power to another, which is only personal in himself; or appoint a successor in an office, which he knows is to cease with his own life?

But,

* Acts xix. 10.

† Ch. xx. 17.

But, whatever share of apostolical authority these Bishops held, whether the *whole*, or only a *part*; or however they came by it, they were manifestly subject to St. Paul's authority. They did not come together to Miletus of their own accord, nor were they *invited* and *requested* to attend by St. Paul; but they were authoritatively *called* together by him, and the Greek word implies as much: And, when they were come to him, it was not to give him advice, but to receive his charge and direction how to conduct themselves in their ministry.

It does not appear, that St. Paul had any further personal intercourse with the church or clergy of Ephesus. Four years after, according to the common reckoning, he wrote his Epistle to them, full of instructions, exhortations, and directions concerning their faith and conduct as christians. The year after, he wrote his first Epistle to Timothy; and after another year, his second. These epistles, on this occasion, claim our particular attention. In them we find Timothy treated by St. Paul, as the supreme Ruler and Governor in the Church of Ephesus; and directions are given him how to conduct himself in his important office. He is cautioned not to be precipitate in ordinations,* or negligent about the qualifications of those whom he admitted to any sacred function.† He is directed how to proceed against offenders, both clergy and laity.‡ From these circumstances, it must appear evident to every person not blinded by prejudice, that the supreme power of government in that church had devolved on Timothy; for he is here directed to exercise the same authority over it, which St. Paul had done before; and, therefore, he must have been previously invested with the authority which St. Paul had.

Should

* 1 Tim. v. 22. † Ch. iii. 2, &c. ‡ Ch. v. 1, 2, &c. & ver. 19.

Should it be said, that Timothy was an extraordinary person, and as such held this authority—it will be confessing, however, that he had the authority; and we know he had it, by imposition of hands in ordination.* Therefore, the apostolical authority was, not personal in the original apostles, and to end with their lives, but was to descend to successors.

But it does not appear that Timothy was an extraordinary person, in the sense in which the word is used on these occasions, unless his being an Evangelist made him so. But if his being an Evangelist gave him these apostolical powers, Philip the Deacon must have had the same powers, for he was an Evangelist as well as Timothy:† of this however there is no evidence. What is meant by an Evangelist, in the New Testament, cannot now be precisely determined. The word signifies a *preacher*; and probably those ministers of the church, who were not confined to any particular district, but travelled from place to place, to preach the gospel, obtained that appellation, whatever may have been the degree of their orders.

A strong objection against the opinion that Timothy's apostolical powers arose from his being an Evangelist is, the situation in which St. Paul left Titus in Crete. He is never called an Evangelist, and yet we find him invested with the same powers in Crete, which Timothy had at Ephesus—the powers of ordination and government: “For this cause,” says St. Paul to him, “left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are *wanting*”—or, according to the marginal translation, the things that are *left undone*—“and ordain Elders,” Presbyters, or Bishops—“in every city, as I had appointed thee.”‡

VOL. I.

N

Whether

* 1 Tim. iv. 14. 2 Tim. i. 6. † Acts xxi. 8. ‡ Tit. i. 5.

Whether there were any Elders in Crete, before St. Paul left Titus there, we are not told. If there were, why could not they have set in order the things which the apostle had left undone, and have ordained the elders which were wanting? Or, if there were none, would it not have been as easy for St. Paul to have ordained three or four, and then have left the business to them, as it was to leave Titus there to supply his place? The same observation may be made with regard to his fixing Timothy at Ephesus—In that place, we know, there were Elders, Presbyters, or Bishops; for we are told so expressly.* What need could there be of Timothy's being fixed there, only to do what those Elders or Bishops could have done just as well, upon the supposition that they had the powers of government and ordination vested in them?

That the word *Bishop* has a different meaning in the acts and writings of the apostles from what it has in modern language, is readily granted; and, I believe, never was disputed by any person moderately acquainted with the subject. To take shelter under the obscurity of old names and titles of office shews want of candor, and displays more of the art of the disputant, than of the ingenuity of the fair inquirer. *Names* are not worth contesting—the *powers* implied in those names are the proper object of our attention: and, that the same names of office, in different ages, or used under different circumstances, may imply different powers, will not, I presume, be disputed. The word *Imperator*, Emperor, had a very different meaning at Rome, while their government was republican, from what it had after the government became an absolute monarchy—In the first case, it was only a title of honour given by the army to their general, on account of some sig-
nal

* Acts xx. 17, 28.

nal advantage gained over the enemy; in the latter, it denoted as absolute a monarch, as the world ever saw. Under the Roman republic, too, the word *Consul* was the stile of the first officer of the state; what it means now needs no explanation. St. Peter calls himself an Elder; so doth St. John.* Were they, therefore, on a level with the Elders of Ephesus? Christ also is called the Bishop of our souls.† I mention these instances to shew that the *same name* of office implies *different powers*, according as it is applied. We ought, therefore, and the fair inquirer will, attend to the *meaning* of words, and not be led away merely by the *sound*.

Where certainty cannot be had, a prudent man will follow the highest probability. And, I hope, I may mention what I take to be so in this case, without offence to any one. I suppose, that while the original apostles lived, and for some time after their death, they who were advanced to the apostolical office were called *Apostles*. By this stile, Epaphroditus is mentioned by St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians.‡ For though our Translators have used the word *Messenger* in our Bible, the Greek word is *Apostle*. And in his Epistle to the Romans,§ Andronicus and Junias|| have the same appellation. In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, there is this passage—"Our brethren, the *Messengers* of the Churches, the glory of Christ." In the Greek, it is the *Apostles* of the Churches. But when the original apostles were dead, their successors gradually appropriated that name to *them*, by way of eminence; and contented themselves with the name of *Bishops*, that is, Overseers; which had before denoted the same order with Presbyters. For, that there were *three* orders of clergy at Ephesus

* 1 Pet. v. 1. 2 John i. and 3 John i. † 1 Pet. ii. 25.

‡ Ch. ii. 25. § Ch. xvi. 7. || Called Junia in our Bible.

fus cannot be denied—Timothy, their Apostle; the Bishops, Presbyters, or Elders; and the Deacons. Nor can any reason be given, why we should suppose this church to have been constituted on a different plan from others.

It is true, that in most of St. Paul's Epistles, the Apostles of the Churches to whom he writes are not mentioned; and probably, at the time of writing those Epistles, there were none appointed. For, it is reasonable to suppose, that the original apostles kept the superintendency of the churches which they planted in their own hands, till the decline of life, or distance of place, rendered them unable to continue it; or, till the churches had come to such maturity and stability in the faith, that they might safely be trusted to a successor, though he had not those eminent gifts and qualifications which the first apostles possessed. But, in several of his Epistles, there is express mention of the superior minister of the church, then called the *Apostle* of that church, and now distinguished by the stile of *Bishop*, in whose hands the powers of ordination and government were lodged. Of Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, there can be no doubt. That Epaphroditus is mentioned as the Apostle of the Philippians, I have already observed; and there is a ready and plain reason why that Epistle was written to the Church of Philippi, and not to him their Apostle; namely, that he was with St. Paul, at Rome, at the time of writing it, and was the bearer of it to the church over which he presided. This is evident from the afore cited verse of this Epistle, which runs thus; "Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and companion in labour, and fellow-foldier, but your *Apostle*"—or, as we should now express it, your *Bishop*. That he was the bearer of the Epistle, I have

have no other proof to give than the note at the end of it; which, though it be not canonical scripture, will, I trust, have its due weight—"It was written to the Philippians from Rome, by Epaphroditus."

From comparing dates, it will appear that it was written by St. Paul while he was a prisoner at Rome. He arrived in Rome, in the year of our Lord sixty-three. We know he continued a prisoner two years;* and this Epistle was written in sixty-four.† Probably Epaphroditus went to visit him, on this occasion; to comfort him in his confinement; and to relieve his necessity. For, St. Paul speaks of him as one who had "ministered to his wants."‡

Should I say that Archippus is mentioned in the Epistle to the Colossians, as the governor or superior minister of the Church of Laodicea, I do not apprehend that the assertion would be thought extravagant. I will bring the circumstances together, and submit them to the candor of the reader. Towards the close of the Epistle, St. Paul gives this direction: "Salute the brethren which are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the Church which is in his house. And when this Epistle is read amongst you, cause that it be read also in the Church of the Laodiceans; and that ye likewise read the Epistle from Laodicea. And say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it."§ Why such an admonition should be sent to Archippus more than to the other ministers, unless the supreme government was in his hands, a more satisfactory reason may possibly be given by others, than at present occurs to me. It could not be that St. Paul had greater apprehensions for him, than for the other ministers; for, in another

* Acts xxviii. 30. † According to the chronology of our Bible. ‡ Philip ii. 25. § Coloss. iv. 15, 16, 17.

ther Epistle, he mentions him with great respect—if not as his beloved, at least as his fellow-soldier.*

The remarks which I shall make, will be only three; and they shall be short.

1. That from the conduct of the apostles, and particularly of St. Paul, whose conduct is the most minutely related, it is impossible they should have supposed, that their commission was a temporary one; and to expire with their lives. For, in fact, they did appoint persons to succeed them, in the superintendency and government of the churches which they planted. As Christ sent them, as his Father had sent him; so they sent others, as Christ had sent them. And consequently, this mode of perpetual succession of ministers in the church, with the apostolical powers of ordination and government, is, by the authority of the holy apostles, settled according to the will of Christ the all-glorious head of the church: and, in this succession, the promise of Christ to his apostles, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,” has hitherto been literally fulfilled; and, we trust in his Almighty power and goodness, will continue to be so, till the consummation of all things.

2. That since Timothy at Ephesus, and Titus in Crete, had under them a number of Elders, Presbyters, or Bishops, it is evident that Timothy and Titus were not parochial Bishops; unless by *parish*, we understand what is now meant by *diocese*. Nor could they, who were under them, be parochial Bishops; because, being under others, they were only subordinate ministers, and therefore without the powers of ordination and government, which must of necessity go together: consequently, the modern-invented scheme of parochial Bishops is unsupported and idle.

3. That

* Philem. ver. 2.

3. That since the holy apostles did, in obedience to Christ, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost, transmit to others the powers they received from him, constituting Bishops, Presbyters and Deacons, as three orders of ministers in his church; it is the duty of all christians to submit to that government which they, the apostles, have instituted; and not to run after the new-fangled scheme of parochial Episcopacy, of which the Bible knows nothing; and of which the Christian Church knew nothing, till a little more than two centuries ago.

DISCOURSE III.

OF BAPTISM.

MATT. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

BEFORE I enter on the consideration of this text, I have to observe, that the marginal translation in our Bible is more agreeable to the Greek Testament—"Go ye therefore and make Disciples, or Christians of all nations:" the Greek word signifying not only *to teach*, but also admit as a scholar; and it is different from the word rendered, *teaching*, in the middle of the text, which properly signifies, *to teach*, or instruct.

The same commission is, in different words, recorded by St. Mark.* And, as the two passages throw mutual light on each other, I will here recite it:—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned"—left in that state of condemnation, to which all men are by nature subject. The meaning of the Text may therefore be thus expressed—

* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

sed—‘ In virtue of that supremacy of power which the Father hath given to me, I send you into the world to preach my gospel to those of all nations who will hear you; and to make Disciples or Christians of all those who shall receive your testimony, by baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: And, in the execution of this commission, I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world.’ Thus understood, the Text presents several considerations to our attention:—

- I. The extent of the commission; or, who the persons were, who were empowered by it to administer Baptism.
- II. The meaning of the command to *baptise*.
- III. The objects of the commission, or who they were to whom the gospel was to be preached.
- IV. The faith into which Converts were to be baptised.
- V. The subsequent instructions which were to be given to those who should be baptised.
- VI. The continuance or permanency of the commission.

Under one or other of these heads, all that will be necessary to a proper knowledge of Christian Baptism may be reduced. And,

- I. Of the extent of the commission; or of the persons who were empowered by it to administer Baptism.

If it be considered, that there is no intimation given of any person’s being present, at this time, but the eleven apostles; and, on the contrary, that every circumstance concurs to prove that no other person was present; there can be no doubt, but that the commission was given to them only; and consequently, that it was confined to them, and to those whom they should, in Christ’s name, and by his

authority, appoint to succeed them. The transaction passed on a mountain in Galilee, where Christ, according to his promise, met his disciples after his resurrection.* Thither, we are told, the eleven disciples went, "as Jesus had appointed *them*"—that "*they* saw" and "worshipped him"—that he spake unto *them*, saying, "All power is given unto me," &c.† No person besides the eleven apostles could have any pretension to the commission then given, because no other person was present. Consequently, no person can have authority to administer Christian Baptism, unless it be derived from the Apostles. And the Scriptures having pointed out no other way of communicating this authority, but by the hands of the Apostles of the Church—they, I mean, who have succeeded the original Apostles in the powers of ordination and government—by them only can this authority be now imparted. The whole efficacy of baptism depending on the institution of Christ, his institution ought to be observed with all possible exactness. There is no inherent virtue in water to cleanse from the defilements of sin; if there were, remission of sins would accompany every washing of the body. Nor can there be any magical power in repeating the words, 'I baptise thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' Without regard to the institution of Christ, it is mere farce and nonsense. Now, if Christ's institution gives to baptism its whole efficacy, can we suppose that the administrator whom he has appointed, is not as requisite to give validity to the sacrament, as either the matter or the form? Have we more right to change the one than the other? In so plain a case, many words cannot be necessary: The conclusion is, that as Christ gave authority to baptise to his apostles

* Matt. xxvi. 32.

† xxviii. 16, 17, 18.

apostles only, so none can possess that authority now, unless it be derived from them.

II. The second consideration which the text presents to us, respects the meaning of the command to *baptise*.

The natural quality of water, in cleansing the body from external defilements, made it a fit emblem to represent the cleansing of the soul from the defilements of sin. This use the Holy Spirit of God has made of it in the Bible, enabling us, by those ideas which we get from our bodily senses, to form some conception of spiritual matters, of which we can form no ideas but by analogy. By baptism, then, we are taught, that as the body is made pure by washing with water; so is the soul made pure by the pardoning mercy of God, and the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.

In all religions, washing with water, to signify the inward purity of the heart, has been thought a necessary preparation for the worship of God. The practice stands on this great truth, that the purity of the divine nature cannot accept the prayers and offerings of men defiled by sin. The universality of the practice is, in truth, a universal confession, that all men are sinners, and unfit, without forgiveness, to approach God in religious worship.

That this was the meaning of the various purifications by water, under the law of Moses, appears from this circumstance, that however pure the body was from external pollution, he who had contracted any legal defilement, was unfit for the public offices of religion, till he had cleansed himself by legal ablution. It was not, therefore, to get rid of the defilement of the *body*, that these ablutions were ordered, but to point out and represent that purity of *soul*, which was necessary to render both themselves and their worship acceptable to him, who is of
pure

purser eyes than to behold iniquity, and with whom no unclean thing can dwell. The mind of holy David seems to have been deeply impressed with this sentiment, when he said, "I will *wash* my hands in innocency, O Lord, and so will I go to thine altar;"* implying, that guilt was an improper attendant to the altar of God; that therefore, innocency must be preserved, or guilt must be removed to make us fit to worship the fountain of purity.

From hence the transition was not so great, but that the human mind could easily follow it, to make washing with water the expression or outward emblem of repentance, or conversion of the heart from former evil practices, to a virtuous and holy life. And, as persons in this state of repentance renounced, of course, the vices and wicked tempers which proceed from the suggestions of the *Evil One*, eminently so called, and gave themselves up to be governed by the principles of virtue and goodness, which can only proceed from the Spirit of God; the process was not difficult to lead the mind to consider Baptism as the sacrament of initiation into the church or family of God, which implied repentance of all past sin, faith in the mercy and promises of God, the denial of every thing contrary to his will, and obedience to all his commandments, or holiness of life. This is properly a *NEW BIRTH*, or *nature*; "Old things are past away; and all things are become new."† And, as this change of heart—these good resolutions and purposes, can proceed only from the Spirit of God, the mind is led to consider and look to the energy and operation of the Holy Spirit, as the giver of that repentance and faith; or of that new life which baptism supposes, and of which it is the emblem or representation.

That

* Ps. xxvi. 6.

† 2 Cor. v. 17.

That the Jews universally baptised those profelytes from heathenism who conformed to their Law, is attested by their best authors. Nor did they think those profelytes were fully admitted into their nation and church, till the rite of baptism was superadded to the sacrament of circumcision. And this baptism they administered to all profelytes, male and female, and to their children.*

There is a remarkable circumstance related by St. John, respecting baptism among the Jews, which shews that they not only expected Elias, or one of the old prophets, would rise from the dead, and come to visit them, at the time of Messiah's appearance; but that a particular baptism would then be instituted, either by that prophet, or Messiah, and that it would extend even to the Jews themselves. The messengers sent by the Pharisees to John Baptist, to know what character he assumed, whether that of Elias or Messiah, finding he disclaimed both, that is, in the sense in which they made the inquiry, asked with some earnestness, "Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"† But, at his baptising Jews who came to him, they shewed no surprise, as they most certainly would have done, had they not expected that conduct from Elias and Messiah, when they should appear. Nor do we find that even the Pharisees, the strictest sect of the Jews, ever brought any accusation against Christ, on account of the baptism administered by him. For, that he did institute a baptism distinct from that of John, and administer it by the hands of his apostles, we have the most direct testimony.‡

The disciples, therefore, could be at no loss what to understand by the command to *baptise*, when it was

* See Lewis' orig. Heb. B. iv. C. 2. † John i. 25.

‡ Compare John iii. 26, with iv. 1, 2.

was given them. They knew the custom of their own nation was to baptise, at least, all profelytes—they had been witnesses of the baptism of John, for some of them had been his disciples—they expected, in common with their countrymen, that Messiah would institute a baptism peculiar to himself, and they had been once sent by him to preach and to administer it. With what words that baptism was administered we are not told: nor was there any direction given then, nor in Christ's last commission to them, respecting the manner of administration. The fair induction is, that the original mode of administering Christian Baptism was the same that had obtained among the Jews in the baptising of profelytes; that is, by washing or immersing the whole body in water. This, too, seems most congruous to the general expressions of Holy Scripture; and, I presume, it will, upon examination, appear to have been the general practice of the primitive church. The subject is too long to be here considered; I shall therefore only observe, that though immersion was the general practice, yet in cases of sickness, baptism was administered by pouring water on the head; and this baptism was never repeated; but, upon recovery, confirmation followed. Baptism therefore by affusion, was esteemed valid baptism by the primitive church. They probably received it from the apostles, that, at least in cases of necessity, baptism might be so administered; on any other ground, it will be hard to give an account how the practice obtained in the church at all.

Though I have supposed that the apostles administered baptism by immersion of the whole body; and have said that such a supposition is most agreeable to the general scope of the New Testament; still, I am ready to own, that from the circumstances related in the account of the Jailor's baptism, it seems

seems improbable that immersion was practised in that instance. The whole transaction passed after midnight—the prayers and praises of Paul and Silas—the earthquake and opening the prison-doors—the address of the Jailor, and St. Paul's discourse to him—his washing their wounds, and the baptism of him and his household.* One circumstance which is mentioned shews that no delay was made—"He took them"—Paul and Silas—"the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptised, he and all his, straightway." In this situation, where should they, on an emergency, get conveniences of vessel and water for the immersion of the whole body? The man was a heathen, and not a Jew; and was under no necessity of keeping a quantity of water ready for legal purifications, as some have supposed. To have gone out of the precincts of his jail, with his prisoners, would have cost him his life. I mention these circumstances as probabilities, (and to me they appear strong ones) that the Jailor and his family were baptised by *affusion*, and not by *immersion*.

Baptism being a figure of inward purity, or of cleansing the soul from sin, it cannot be supposed that the quantity of water adds to the validity or efficacy of the sacrament. That it does not, will, I think, follow from what our Saviour said to Peter, when he washed the feet of his disciples—"He that is washed, needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." That this saying of Christ did not relate merely to bodily cleanliness is plain, from his remark to the same disciple, upon his objecting to Christ's doing so servile an office for him—"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me."† That washing, therefore, was not only an instance of humility in Christ, and an example of it to his apostles;

* Acts xvi.

† John xiii. 8, 10.

ties; but it was figurative of internal and spiritual cleansing. For how should washing the feet make the whole body clean, unless it be in a figurative and mystical sense? I conclude, therefore, that the effects of baptism, which is a figurative washing, are not confined to immersion of the whole body; but that this sacred rite may be also validly preformed by pouring water on the subject of it, by a Minister duly authorized, and using the form of words which Christ has appointed.

III. The third consideration, which the text presents to us, relates to the objects of this commission. These, the text informs us, were all nations: "Go ye and make disciples of all nations, baptising them," &c.

The first intimation of a Saviour to deliver man from sin and death was made to Adam, when God said, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."* This promise being made before Adam had any posterity must include the whole human race. Of the same extent is the promise made to Abraham; "In thee, and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed."† And though it pleased God, for the accomplishment of his own purposes, to enter into covenant with Abraham, and to take his descendants for his own peculiar people, and to bless them with privileges from which the other nations of the world were excluded; yet, when the purpose of God was completed, by the coming of the promised seed, and by his fulfilling all that God by his holy prophets, had foretold concerning him; that particular œconomy, by which the Jews were separated from the rest of the world, both in religion and civil polity, was dissolved by him who had been the author of its institution; the church or kingdom of God was laid open to all the nations

* Gen. iii. 15.

† xxviii. 14.

nations of the earth; and the blessing of the promised seed, according to the original purpose of God, was proclaimed to them all, and offered to their acceptance. Accordingly, when Christ sent his apostles into the world, it was with the express direction to preach to all nations, and to baptise all those who believed, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; thereby to admit them into his family or church, and make them heirs of that salvation which he had purchased with his blood, and sealed by his resurrection from the dead.

However plain the direction of Christ may appear to us, it is certain the disciples did not at first comprehend its meaning. They who know the force of strong prejudice will be cautious of censuring the slowness of their understandings, in this particular. Bred up in the opinion, that the blessings of Messiah belonged exclusively to their nation, and that all the rest of the world was cast off by God, as unworthy of his regard; what wonder is it that they should, at first, suppose their mission to be confined to the Jews, the seed of Abraham; and that their Master's order, to teach all nations and baptise those who believed, related only to those Jews who were dispersed among the Gentiles? That they did understand the order of Christ, in this sense, evidently appears from their conduct. St. Peter's remark to Cornelius, "Ye know how, that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company with, or come unto one of another nation,"* may satisfy us what the sentiments and practice of the apostles were, in this matter. Thus embarrassed by their prejudices, the gracious designs of God toward the Gentile world were delayed, till the vision which HE was pleased to send to

Vol. I.

P

St.

* Acts x. 28.

St. Peter at Joppa, and the strong reasonings and vigorous endeavours of St. Paul, whom HE had called to be the more especial Apostle of the Gentiles, at length convinced them, that "God had also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life."* From this time, they hesitated not to proclaim to all who would hear them, the mercy of God, through the mediation of Jesus; and great was the success of their ministry.

Should it seem surprising to any one, that persons to whom Christ had promised the Holy Spirit, to lead them into all truth, and to bring all things that he had said to their remembrance, and to whom that promise had, in a most wonderful manner, been fulfilled soon after his ascension; should it seem surprising, that they could not understand a plain order, without further and even miraculous instruction; let his wonder cease, and let him remember, that in their former commission they had received this restriction, "Go not into the way," or the country, "of the Gentiles; and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."† As the purport of that commission was nearly the same with the last which they received, to call men to repentance and amendment of life, and was also accompanied with the injunction for the administration of baptism; it was not very strange, that they should suppose that the objects of both commissions were the same, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel;" only that the limits, within which it was to be exercised, were extended; and that they were now permitted to go into the country of the Gentiles, and among the Samaritans, wherever they could find Jews, to whom to make known the glad tidings of salvation.

From

* Ch. xi. 18.

† Matt. x. 5, 6.

From the circumstance of the apostles misunderstanding their commission in this instance, a most important truth will evidently appear; namely, that the influence of the Holy Spirit, even when his gifts are miraculous, is not by compulsion and irresistible force, but according to the nature of man. That man has a will of his own, and that his having this will constitutes his nature, and makes him to be what he is, I presume will not be denied. To act irresistibly on him would destroy his nature; for a will that is not free is, in truth, no will at all. The influence of the Spirit must therefore be in some way consistent with the operation of the human will, or man must cease to be what he now is. Though, therefore, the direction given to the apostles to teach and baptise all nations, would have been easily understood by persons not under their prejudices; yet, to take off the bias of their education, it was necessary that other means should be used besides the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. And we see, that God did deal with St. Peter in a way which convinced his reason, without forcing his will.

Thus it appears, that the *object* of the commission given to the apostles, when they were directed to teach and baptise, was, *all the nations of the world*—every individual who would hear them—high and low, rich and poor, young and old, bond and free—none were excluded—To all, the glad tidings of salvation, through Christ crucified, were to be preached; and they who believed were to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

IV. The fourth consideration presented to us by the text is, the faith into which converts to christianity are to be baptised; namely, the faith of the *Holy Trinity*.

If

If they were to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, the belief of such a distinction in the divine nature, as these titles implied, was a necessary qualification for baptism; for to be baptised in the name, or into the faith of a person who had no real existence, or whose existence they did not believe, was an absurdity too gross to be thought of. To be baptised in the name of the Father, therefore, supposes a belief in God under that relation—that he is a Father. But if he be a Father, he must have a Son; and his Son must be of the same nature with himself: Consequently the Son must be eternal, or he would not be of the same nature with the Father. But the Father being the fountain of the Divinity, therefore is the nature of the Son derivative, in such manner as is best communicated to us under the stile of Father and Son. He is therefore *God*, not of himself, but of *God—deus de deo*. And if there be a Holy Spirit of God—and without a Spirit we can have no conception of the existence of any being—he must be of the same nature with God, and equally eternal with him. The spirit of man is of the nature of man; and without his spirit, man would not be what he now is. The Spirit of God, too, must be of the nature of God; and without his Spirit, God would not be what he is. That this distinction of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, in the Godhead, is made in the scripture, needs no other proof than the words of the text. The scripture also declares, in precise terms, that there is but *One God*. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost therefore are that One God; and the faith into which converts to christianity were to be baptised, was the belief of this Trinity in the Unity of the Godhead—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, One God, blessed for evermore.

Those

Those christians, therefore, err, who suppose that the only article of faith required of converts to christianity, as a qualification for baptism, was the belief that Jesus was the Messiah; for a Jew, who looked only for a temporal deliverer in Messiah, might have that faith, and so might a Gentile, without believing a word of his Divinity. But without believing his Divinity, they could have no assurance of remission of sins through him, because there could be no merit in the atonement he had made. The faith, therefore, requisite to Christian Baptism, is the belief that Jesus Christ is the *Son of God made man*; according to his divinity, of the same nature with the Father; and that he, in his humanity, made a meritorious atonement and propitiation for sin; and that remission of sins and eternal life, are to be obtained through him; because, as he died, so he rose again and ascended into heaven, whence he came down; and there ever liveth to make intercession for sinners; and is, therefore, able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God, through his mediation. In this sense, St. Philip understood this matter; and, in this sense, the Ethiopian Eunuch understood St. Philip: "See, said he, there is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?" Philip answered, "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." He replied, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."* And, on this profession, the holy Deacon baptised him. In truth, the Trinity in unity of the Godhead, is the foundation of the Christian religion, without which it cannot stand. The belief of it is as essential to Christianity, as the denial of it is to Mahometanism. Without the belief of it, no man can be a Christian; and without the denial of it, no man can be a Mahometan. As far, therefore, as

* Acts viii. 36, 37.

a man renounces the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, he renounces Christian Baptism. He may call himself a Christian, it is true; but a man is not always what he calls himself. If he labour to overturn the doctrine of the divinity of Christ, and to establish the unity of the Godhead, to the exclusion of the Son and Holy Ghost; he labours more for Mahomet, than for Christ; for, leaving the divinity of Christ out of the question, there is no more remission of sin to be had through the one, than through the other.

What hath led Christians to think lightly of a doctrine so essential to their religion, and to all their hopes of future blessedness, is hard to say; unless it be that spirit of vain philosophy, which affects to reduce every thing to the level of the human understanding, and to believe nothing which it cannot comprehend—an instance of arrogance which pretenders to abilities are very apt to think themselves privileged to assume; but which surely indicates a narrow mind and a shallow understanding. Small is the stock of human knowledge. Of material objects we know but little; of spiritual objects nothing, but what God is pleased to reveal. The man who can talk learnedly of vegetation, and circulation, of the influence of the sun and the atmosphere, may foolishly think he comprehends how the grass grows and flourishes in the field. But his vanity imposes upon his understanding, by substituting terms of art, subtle distinctions, and hard words, for real knowledge; and the labourer who cuts down the grass with his scythe, in knowing that a rich soil, a warm sun, and moist atmosphere, are necessary for its free growth, knows nearly as much as the philosopher. By comparing the properties of material objects, and marking the influence they have on each other, much useful knowledge has accrued to the

the world; and, probably, it will derive much more from the same source. This is the limit of natural philosophy—Its pretensions may extend further—its real discoveries have not yet advanced quite so far. But the real nature or essence of these objects is hidden from us; and, most probably, we have not abilities to comprehend them.

If we pass from the philosophy of *body* to that of *mind*, insurmountable difficulties will still attend our most exact investigations. Of *spirit* we know nothing but by analogy, and by analogy all our reasonings must be conducted. From natural bodies, and the impressions they make on us, all our analogy must be drawn: And if we know not the essence of those bodies, nor how they make impressions on our minds; how can we, by them, discover the essence of *spirit*—more especially the essence of *God*; so as to be able to ascertain, with such exact precision, as some have arrogantly pretended to do, that there is not a Trinity in the Unity of the divine essence? To believe nothing incomprehensible by our own understanding, is to make our understanding the measure of every thing, and the standard of truth. And yet that some things are true which we do not comprehend, must be owned by the most sceptical philosopher. Does he comprehend how he wills, and remembers, and thinks, and reasons? If he does, he can certainly explain the whole process, and the world will be much indebted to him for the discovery. Then, too, he may claim some right to decide upon the nature of spirit, and the essence of God. Vain mortal! abate thy foolish arrogance of believing nothing thou dost not comprehend; or cease to eat, till thou canst comprehend how it is thy food strengthens and nourishes thee.

Christian

Christian Religion comes to us as a revelation from God, making known the method of reconciling sinful man to himself. It, therefore, is not the object of philosophy; nor can all its doctrines be supposed to be level to our comprehension, unless we have the vanity to suppose that we can comprehend the works and declarations of infinite power and wisdom. Our proper business is to examine the credentials of this revelation, and see whether they be such as ought to convince a reasonable man; and then to inquire into the meaning of it—what it is that God does declare to us. Of these we are to judge. But let us remember, if we judge wrong, we do it at our peril, and must abide the consequence. If this revelation be from God, we ought to believe all that it declares; and the Trinity of the Godhead being made known by it, becomes the object of our faith, not the subject of metaphysical investigation. That the doctrine of the Trinity makes one article of this revelation, has been abundantly proved by a variety of authors, who have written on the subject. That some have denied that the doctrine of the Trinity makes any part of divine revelation, I am fully sensible. But the interpretation of scripture given in consequence of such an opinion, shews more the dexterity of the human mind at bending and forcing plain passages of scripture, to make them coincide with a favourite preconceived system, than it does the candor of the fair inquirer.

However it may appear to others, the command of the text to baptise in “the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” is full proof that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a plain doctrine of christian revelation. Only suppose, for a few minutes, that revelation to be true—why should converts to it be baptised in the name
of

of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and faith in the Son and Holy Ghost be required as a necessary qualification for this baptism, unless the Son and Holy Ghost be equally God with the Father? If the Son be but a creature, and the Holy Ghost a mere non-entity, or but a quality of the Father, as some have been hardy enough to affirm, what presumption was it to join *them* with the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth; in the very sacrament, too, of initiation or adoption into his church! If the Son be not very God of very God, he is not God at all; and if the Holy Ghost be not *really* and *truly* God, he is no God; and neither HE, nor the Son can have any right to the station they hold in the form of Christian Baptism. Suppose the Son to be only the word, or will, or wisdom of God, and called his Son by way of accommodation; and the Holy Ghost to be only a term denoting the energy or effusion of God's power, and not real persons, in unity with the Father making one God; and then read the Text, according to this philosophical emendation—'Go ye and teach all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of his word, will, or wisdom, and of the energy or effusion of his power.' Glorious effort at elucidation! Or, suppose the Son to be a creature—as such, exalt him as you will, he can be but a creature at the last: and to baptise in his name, in conjunction with his Creator, is downright idolatry—giving to the creature the honour due to the Creator. Either, then, the doctrine of the Trinity is a Christian doctrine, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; or, Christianity is an imposture.

The faith, therefore, into which the Apostles were directed to baptise converts to Christianity, was faith in the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, one God. But if this faith be necessary to qualify

a person for baptism, it is essential to the Christian character; and in the same degree the doctrine is renounced, the Christian character is renounced with it. A man, as I said before, may call himself a Christian, or what he pleases, and others may be so civil as to give him the name which he assumes. But, to renounce the divinity of Christ is, in truth, to renounce his religion; for on that ground his religion stands, and thence draws all its merit.

But, though the belief of Christ's divinity be the grand article of the christian religion; yet, in preaching it, so as to make it the object of a reasonable faith, it will include, as I before mentioned, the explanation of some other points which are necessarily connected with it; such as, the union of the human with the divine nature of the Son of God, so as to make *One Christ*—the atonement he made for sin by his death—the assurance of the divine acceptance of his atonement; and the consequent remission of sins, through the mercy of God, which his resurrection and ascension give to us—the presence of his Holy Spirit with his Church, to strengthen the weakness of nature, and enable us to resist temptations, and persevere in holiness of life; and the certainty of the resurrection to eternal happiness through him.

With these particulars it was necessary the converts should be made acquainted; because, without the belief of them, they could not come to baptism on reasonable ground, nor be fully sensible of the benefits they were to obtain by it. They could have no reason to trust to him for salvation, unless they believed him to be able to save them. No creature could give assurance of his ability to save. The belief of the divinity of Christ was, therefore, necessary to give confidence to their hopes. The belief of Christ's humanity was also necessary, to make

make it credible that he did die; and that he did die in *their nature*, and thereby made atonement for it; of which atonement they could have had no assurance, had he died in any other nature.*

As to the benefits of Baptism, they are remission of sins; regeneration or adoption into the family of God; the presence of the Holy Spirit; the resurrection of the body; and everlasting life. That these benefits are annexed to baptism, the holy scriptures give ample testimony. "Repent," said St. Peter to the multitude inquiring what they should do, "and be baptised every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."† In the same language, Ananias addressed Saul, "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptised, and wash away thy sins."‡ That we are regenerate and born, or adopted into the family or church of God by baptism, Christ declared to Nicodemus when he said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."§ The kingdom of God is the church of God—the same church both in this world and in the next (for God has but One Church—the body of Christ.) By baptism we are made members of this Church; and, if we continue faithful members till death, shall in it obtain a happy resurrection, and everlasting life—shall continue members of it to all eternity.

V. I come now to the fifth consideration which the text presents to us, namely, The subsequent instructions which were to be given to those who were baptised, and thereby adopted into the family or church of God. This is expressed by Christ in these words, "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The

* Heb. ii. 14, &c. † Acts ii. 38. ‡ xxii. 16. § John iii. 5.

The necessity of this instruction arises from this circumstance—That converts having been, upon their repentance and faith, admitted into the church of God, by baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and having thereby obtained remission of all past sin, original and actual, and a right to all the privileges of that society; their continuance in that blessed company depends on their doing what Christ has commanded. For being admitted into his family, and made members of his body, they must govern themselves by the laws of the family into which they are adopted, and obey the directions of the head of that body, to which they are united. This is, indeed, the very end of their admission into the church of Christ; that, being delivered from the evil world, they might learn his will, and be enabled to do it, and thereby obtain the blessings of his redemption.

What Christ had commanded, his Apostles were to teach them: and, that human infirmity might be no bar to the full execution of Christ's order, the Holy Spirit was given, to lead them into all truth, and to bring to their remembrance whatsoever Christ had said to them. With the present ministers of the gospel the case is somewhat different. Instead of the immediate inspiration of the Holy Spirit, they have the inspired writings of the Evangelists, who have recorded the commandments and discourses of Christ, as far as is necessary for our information, from which to draw their instruction for the people committed to their charge. They have also the history of the Acts of the Apostles, and their writings, to serve as a rule of conduct to them, in teaching and explaining the commands of Christ. Their duty, therefore, requires them to teach the people, out of the writings of the

the Evangelists, as they are explained and enforced by the writings and practice of the holy Apostles: and so far they can proceed on authority.

But, as the writings and practice of the Apostles help to explain and ascertain the records of the Evangelists; so the traditions and practice of the primitive church help to explain the writings and practice of the Apostles, and to shew in what sense they understood the commands and directions of Christ. A faithful and prudent minister will not fail to draw information for his flock from this source, though he will not deliver it as of divine authority.

VI. There now remains only the last particular presented to us by the text to be considered—the continuance of the commission given by Christ to his Apostles to teach and baptise all nations. Was this commission temporary; or, was it to continue as long as Christ's church should continue?

Christ has determined this point, in the most precise manner—"Lo," said he, "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." To the end of the world, therefore, is this commission to continue. To the end of the world, the gospel is to be preached to all nations; and they, who become converts to it, are to be baptised in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded—To the end of the world, then, men will be obliged to submit to this baptism, and hear and do all the commandments of Christ.

the Evangelists; as they are explained and enforced by the writings and practice of the holy Apostles, and so far they can proceed on authority.

But as the writings and practice of the Apostles help to explain and ascertain the records of the Evangelists; to the traditions and practice of the primitive church help to explain the writings and practice of the Apostles; and to show in what sense they understood the commands and directions of Christ. A faithful and prudent minister will not fail to draw information for his flock from this source, though he will not deliver it as of divine authority.

VI. There now remains only the last particular presented to us by the text to be considered—the continuance of the commission given by Christ to his Apostles to teach and baptize all nations. Was this commission temporary, or was it to continue as long as Christ's church should continue?

Christ has determined this point in the most plain manner—"Go," said he, "I am with you every day, even unto the end of the world." To the end of the world, therefore, is this commission to continue. To the end of the world, the gospel is to be preached to all nations; and they, who become converts, are to be baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Ghost; and taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. To the end of the world, then, men will be obliged to submit to this baptism, and bear and do all the commandments of Christ.

THE END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

MA
a
a
a
a
a
T
con
me
Fa
exp
has
we
an
tia
we
an
are
tio
sta
ex

DISCOURSE IV.

OF INFANT BAPTISM.

MARK x. 13, 14, 15, 16. *They brought young children to him, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them.*

THE general subject of Baptism having been considered, in the foregoing discourse; and the meaning of baptising all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, explained; I come now to consider a question that has risen on the subject, namely, whether infants were included in Christ's order to baptise all nations; and, of course, whether they have a right to Christian Baptism.

I never heard it made a question, whether infants were a part of the nation to which they belonged, any more than a part of the family into which they are born. God considered them as part of the nation of the Ninevites, and assigns their helpless state and innocence as one reason why he did not execute the sentence of destruction, which he had denounced

denounced by his Prophet.* They, also, attended as part of the nation of Israel, when God entered into covenant with that people; in the land of Moab; for thus is that assembly described by Moses—"Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God; your captains, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel, your *little ones*, your wives, &c. that thou mayest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, &c."† Infants, therefore, are, in the estimation of God, part of the nation to which they belong, and are of course included in that commission which Christ gave to his apostles, "to make christians of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."‡

That infants are capable of entering into covenant with God appears, not only from the above passage in Deuteronomy, where they are represented as actually entering into covenant with him, equally with the adults of their nation; but also, from the positive command of God himself, who, in the covenant which he made with Abraham, directed every male child of his descendants to be circumcised at eight days old, as a sign and seal of their being under that covenant. And that covenant, of which circumcision was the sign and seal, was the same covenant, in its fundamental principle, with that of the Christian Church, of which baptism is the sign and seal, namely, the covenant of righteousness by faith.¶ Therefore, if infants were capable of entering into one of these covenants, they are capable of entering into the other.

If, then, infants are capable of entering into covenant with God, and did actually do so by his positive command, by circumcision, and in conjunction

* Jonah iv. ii.

† Matt. xxviii. 19.

‡ Deut. xxix. 10, 11, 12.

¶ Heb. iv. ii.

tion with the adult Israelites in the land of Moab—If they are included in the general commission of Christ to baptise—If they are not excluded either by Christ or his apostles; from the sacrament of *Regeneration*—What a monstrous presumption in any mortal, to make that unlawful, which God hath commanded!—to shut the door of Christ's Church against infants, which he left wide open, that they might enter, as well as their parents!

Let it also be remembered, that as Christ gave no particular direction about baptising infants, his apostles would follow the common practice of the Jewish Church. That it was their practice to baptise not only the converts to their religion, but their infants also, is so well known, that it would look like affectation of learning to go about to prove it! Nay more, that they baptised their own infants has been asserted, and I think proved, by learned men, from their best authors.* The practice was founded on the command of God to Moses, three days before the giving of the law on mount Sinai—"Go unto the people," said God to Moses, "and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes"†—It is well known, that all sanctification or purification, under the law, was by bathing or dipping the whole, or part of the body, in water, and washing or sprinkling the clothes, or putting on clean apparel. From this command to sanctify the people by washing with water, that they might be holy to hear the delivery of the law, the Israelites concluded that all children born after that time ought to be sanctified in the same manner, that they might be holy to hear the law, when they came to years of discretion. And, on this principle

VOL. I.

R

it

* See Dr. Hammond, vol. I. p. 608, &c. and Bishop Taylor, Great Exemplar, part I. Definition of Baptism, numb. 8, 9, 10.

† Exod. xix. 10.

it was, that they baptised their profelytes, men, women, and children, sanctifying them by water, to signify their *new birth* into the Hebrew Church; and that they might be holy to hear the law, by obeying which, their new life acquired in Baptism was to be supported. Nor did they esteem them perfectly grafted into their nation, till this sanctification had passed on them.

To this Baptism and the Regeneration therein signified it was, that our Saviour referred, when he shewed his surprise at the dulness of Nicodemus in not apprehending his discourse—"Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things—that baptism is the figure of, and represents a *new or second birth*?

This baptism, our Saviour transferred into his church, and made it the sacrament of initiation into it, and the medium of that new or spiritual birth, without which, no one can enter into the kingdom of God, any more than he can enter into this world any other way, than by his natural birth. Can we then suppose that the apostles, being commanded to baptise all nations, without any restriction of age, would decline to baptise the infant children of those whom they converted, when their nation was full in the practice of baptising the infants of those profelytes, who embraced their religion? They baptised whole families, we know; that there were infants in those families is not certain; but, it is rather a violent presumption, to suppose there were none.

Under these circumstances, to call for a particular command to baptise infants is absurd. The general command of Christ includes them, and the general practice of the Jews was to baptise them—therefore, there was no need of a particular command respecting them—that they are not excluded

is sufficient to justify the practice of admitting them into Christ's church. If a particular command be necessary for baptising infants, why not for administering the communion to women? Of their receiving the communion there is no instance in scripture; though, that they did receive it, in the time of the apostles, with a reasonable man there can be no doubt.

If we consider the necessity there is for baptising infants, a strong argument will rise from it in favour of the practice, unless we suppose they were neglected by him, who came into the world to give his life a ransom for it. Discouraging with Nicodemus, Christ declares, "Except any one be born again, or from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." There is no other way of being *born again* made known to us, but what Christ has instituted—*Baptism with Water and the Spirit*—"Verily, verily I say unto thee, except any one be born of water, and of the spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* If, now, no one can enter into the kingdom of God, but by being born again: and no way of being born again be made known to us but by baptism; then, without baptism, infants cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. And, if Christ has precluded them from baptism, he has also precluded them from the kingdom of heaven.

If it be said, that though Christ has not in direct terms precluded them, yet they are precluded by the qualifications required of persons to be baptised, namely, *repentance* and *faith*; and that infants being incapable of these, are of course incapable of receiving baptism according to Christ's institution; I answer, that should it be granted, that they are incapable of repentance and faith, yet they are proper subjects of baptism, because there are

* John iii. 3, 5.

some benefits of that ordinance of which they stand in need, and which they are capable of receiving. They stand in need of regeneration, adoption into God's family, and the presence of his Holy Spirit: of these they are capable, and these are obtained in Christian Baptism.

And with respect to repentance—It is true they are incapable of it; it is also true, that they do not need it. They bring to baptism what is better than repentance—innocence—and a heart undefiled by any wilful transgression. Should it be said, if they need no repentance, they need no baptism; I reply, though they need no repentance, they need regeneration, and therefore they need baptism. Christ needed neither repentance, nor regeneration; and yet he was baptised with the baptism of repentance, that he might fulfil all righteousness; that is, do every thing which God required, and teach us, by his example as well as precept, that it is our duty to obey God in all things; and that, as no one can enter into the kingdom of heaven by his natural birth, seeing that which is born of the flesh is flesh; so, the second birth is necessary for every one, whether he need repentance or not, and therefore necessary for infants.

That infants are, in some true and proper sense, capable of believing in Christ, I shall boldly affirm, because Christ has said it in direct terms—"Who so shall offend one of these little ones, which believe in me, it were better," &c. To interpret this expression of *young christians* or *new believers*, who may be called *little children* in Christ, will not serve the turn. There is no room for metaphorical interpretation; for, St. Mark, in relating the same transaction, says, Jesus "took a child and set him in the midst of them; and when he had taken him in his arms, he said unto them"—"Who soever shall offend

offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it were better," &c.* How such infants as are here described can come to Christ, or believe in him, unless through the medium of their parents, I see not; and therefore conclude, that the infants of christian parents have a right to christian baptism, on account of the faith of their parents, or of those christian people who have charity enough to bring them to Christ in his holy ordinance, that by it they may be born again, and enter into the kingdom of heaven.

I have also to remark, that Christ hath said, "Whoso shall receive one such little child, in my name, receiveth me." In what sense, I ask, can we receive such infants in the name of Christ, but by receiving them as his disciples? and how can we receive them as Christ's disciples, unless they be made so by baptism?

That there is no absurdity in supposing that the faith of others may be of service to those who, through immature age, are incapable of transacting for themselves in religious matters, appears from Christ's conduct towards many distressed objects whom he healed of their diseases, on the application and faith of their parents or friends. The Centurion's servant was healed, on the faith of his master:† the daughter of the Canaanitish woman, on the faith of her mother:‡ the daughter of Jairus was raised to life, on the faith of her father:§ St. Mark mentions a man's son, from whom a dumb and deaf spirit was cast out, on account of his father's faith.|| These instances cannot be controverted, without calling in question the veracity of the Evangelists.

Lest it should be said that these were only *temporal* blessings, and do not prove that *spiritual* blessings

* Compare Matt. xviii. 1—6, with Mark ix. 36—42.

† Matt. viii. 13. ‡ xv. 28. § Mark v. 36. || ix. 24.

sings are ever conferred on account of the faith of others; I beg leave to call to remembrance the paralytic man, who was brought to Christ on a bed borne by four of his friends. It is said, "Jesus seeing *their* faith"—the faith of his friends—"said to the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."*

Should it be supposed, that this man's sickness was a temporal judgment inflicted by Almighty God, and that when our Saviour said to him, "thy sins are forgiven thee," it was only a freeing him from that temporal judgment—though I see not the reason of such an interpretation, and the history says not a word of his sickness being a particular judgment from God; I will not enter into a dispute about it, but pass on to another instance which I think cannot be evaded, namely, the instance recorded in the text—"They brought young children to Christ, that he should touch them; and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

In discoursing upon this text, I shall offer what I have to say, by way of remarks upon the circumstances mentioned in it: And,

1. The first remark relates to the faith of those who brought these infants to Christ; for, though their faith is not mentioned in so many words, it is as strongly expressed, as words could have done it. What other inducement could they have had

to

* Matt. ix. 2.

to bring those children to Christ, but a wish that they should have the benefit of his blessing, and a belief that he would be pleased graciously to receive them; and by the imposition of his heavenly hands, confer the divine benediction on them? Nor was their faith a weak one—How far it had excited them to bring those children, we know not; we know, however, that it did excite them to break through the obstructions which the ill-judged officiousness of his disciples threw in their way. On what ground the disciples opposed the introduction of those innocents to Christ, it is impossible for us to say. Probably they thought it would be a trouble to their Master, which, especially if it should become a general practice, he would not be able to go through. But, whatever may have been the reason, the faith of those pious people in the goodness of Jesus, and in the efficacy of his blessing, induced them to procure that benefit for their infants, even at the risk of having some degree of rudeness imputed to them. Nor was their confidence ill placed. He that came to seek and to save that which was lost, readily embraced those infants, whom the faith and affection of their parents had brought to him, with the arms of his mercy. And he took the opportunity, which that occurrence presented to him, to give, both by his words and actions, a most instructive lecture to his disciples, and to all his future followers. Which brings me to the second remark I wish to make, namely,

2. The displeasure which Jesus shewed at the interruption his disciples had given to those pious people; and the peremptory command he gave them concerning their future conduct. He who was all meekness and patience, who, numberless times, had borne the prejudices and dulness of his disciples, must have found some more than common cause

cause for displeasure, at this time. Few, indeed, were the occasions that could move his resentment. Once he spoke with seeming harshness to Peter—"Get thee behind me, satan"—but it was because he favoured not the things that were of God, but the things that were of men; and had, as far as he was able, endeavoured to cast a stumbling-block before him, to prevent his submitting to the will of his Father, in enduring the sufferings that were allotted to him.* On another occasion, he looked round on the Pharisees, who were present, with anger: it was not, however, the anger of wrath and ill-will, but of pity and grief†—he was grieved at the impenetrable hardness of their hearts, which could be convinced by no miracles, and which no profers of mercy could soften. When, with apparent violence, he drove, with a whip of small cords, or more probably with a handful of rushes, the buyers and sellers out of the temple, it was because they made his Father's house, a house of merchandize, and converted that sacred building which should have been a house of prayer for all nations, into a den of thieves.‡ In all these instances, not his own personal cause, but the cause of his Father and of mankind moved his immaculate resentment. Pitying grief, and holy indignation, arose in his breast, when he saw that all which God could do, and all that he could suffer, would be too little to save that stubborn and perverse nation from impending destruction.

Something of the same kind must have moved his displeasure against his disciples, on the occasion now under our consideration. He had come to offer salvation to a lost and wretched world—to make atonement for sin, and redeem it from death

—to

* Matt. xvi. 23.

† Mark iii. 5.

‡ John ii. 15, 16. Mark xi. 17.

—to proclaim the mercy and forgiveness of God to the penitent believer—to open the kingdom of heaven, and make it possible for fallen man, by a new birth from the Holy Spirit, to enter into it and be saved, as Noah and his family were saved in the ark, from perishing by water. His disciples, when he should return to heaven, were to be his messengers to proclaim these glad tidings to the world; and to invite all the nations of the earth to avail themselves of the overtures of divine mercy, by coming into his church, and living under the guidance of his Spirit. Of this church, they were to be the rulers and governors; and were to be authorised by him, to admit men into it, from all nations under heaven, by baptising them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; and then, to teach them his commandments, as the rule of their future life.

His disciples, from their personal attendance on him, were in the habit of looking to him for directions on all occasions; his example would, therefore, have great weight with them, and direct their conduct in the ministry that was to be committed to them. On several occasions, they had been witnesses of the condescension, with which he received all who came to him for instruction. His salvation was intended for all men, and regarded not the distinction which worldly circumstances made among them. He, therefore, had never turned away his face from the poor, nor rejected those of low condition. The greatest sinners, who came with penitent hearts and lively faith, found the kindest attention from him, and drank deep of the cup of his mercy and love. He had taken our humanity, to redeem it from death and misery. All, therefore, who partook of that humanity, were objects of his care; and he regarded them as they were men; for,

as they were men, they needed his salvation; because they were sinners, and, by their natural birth, could not inherit the kingdom of God.

Were infants, then, the only part of the human race to be rejected by Christ; and rejected, too, merely because they were infants? because they were unable to claim the common privilege of human nature? an interest in the Saviour of men—a privilege to which they were born, and to which their very humanity gave them a right? Should innocence be rejected, while the vilest penitent sinner was received? Could a defiled heart, and a foul conscience, be more acceptable to the embraces of perfect purity, than the unsullied simplicity of an innocent child, undefiled by any actual transgressions; but deprived of a title to the kingdom of God, merely by the misfortune of being born of a nature corrupted by the fault of its original parent? Let common sense answer these questions, and I shall rest secure that, uninfluenced by prejudice and party, common sense will give a true decision. And common sense ought to have taught Christ's disciples then, and ought to teach all men now, that while repentance is acceptable to Christ, innocence can never be rejected by him—while the door was set open to receive applicants of all ranks and denominations of men, it never could be intended that it should be shut against infants. What Christ's sentiments were, on this occasion, may be directly learned from what he said and did. He was displeased with his disciples, that they should presume to counteract the intentions of his goodness, and set limits to his kingdom, by preventing little children from being brought to him: And to guard for ever against any more impediments of the kind, and set wide open the door for their admission, he said, "Suffer," permit, "the little children to come

come

come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein, And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them." At this conduct of Christ, every enemy to infant baptism ought to tremble, when he compares his own with it. Does such a one think to escape the displeasure of Christ, because those infants were not brought to him for the purpose of baptism? They were brought to receive his blessing, by the imposition of his hands—And, is he less able to bless them in holy baptism, administered by his authorised servant, than he was to bless them by putting his hands on them? Or, is his love now extinguished, which then burnt so warmly, and the arms of his mercy closed, which were then so widely extended to receive the infant innocents? Or, is his intercession for them less prevalent in heaven, enthroned as he now is on the right hand of the majesty on high, than it was, while he ministered here on earth?

3. But we are fully justified in applying this passage to baptism, because the right of infants to that holy ordinance is directly established by the reason which our Saviour gives, why little children should be permitted to come to him—"For of such is the kingdom of God"—The true meaning of which expression is, For to such little children the kingdom of heaven belongs—it is their property, and they have a right to go into it.*

To

*—τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῆς Θεοῦ. Here τῶν τοιούτων is the *genetive possessive*, as the grammarians speak, and denotes property. The proper rendering, therefore, is—*For to such the kingdom of God belongs*; or, *The kingdom of God is the property of such little children*. To mention no more, the 5th chapter of St. Matthew, has two similar constructions, verse 3 and 10. *Blessed are the poor in spirit—Blessed are they which are persecut-*

To this I have heard it replied, That on this ground *all* children have a right to baptism—And I abide the consequence—That *all such* infants as come to Christ, that is, as are brought by christian people to baptism, have a right to be admitted into the kingdom of God, by the washing of Regeneration. The very act of bringing them implies an obligation to educate and instruct them in the faith and duty of a christian: And being regenerate and adopted into Christ's Church, they become disciples, or scholars in his school; and are there to be taught, by his ministers, whatsoever he commanded his holy apostles to teach.

4. The next words of the text, which contain the reason assigned by our Saviour why infants should come to him, afford another strong argument against the opposers of infant baptism, as they shew that it was the intention of Christ, that they should be admitted into his church. "Verily, verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein." In what way infants can receive, that is, enter into the kingdom of God, unless by baptism, let those point out who are hardy enough to deny that baptism is the instituted mode of admission. The Anabaptists say, they are incapable of repentance and faith. By repentance and faith therefore they cannot enter. Unless, then, they do enter by being baptised on account of the faith of their parents or sureties who belong to the kingdom of God, they cannot enter into it at all. And yet Christ has made their receiving the kingdom of God a standard for all others who shall enter into it. That there is some difference

ed for righteousness sake—ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν ὐρανῶν— which our translators have properly rendered—*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* But had they observed the same mode of version with that in the text, they would have written—*For of them is the kingdom of heaven.*

ence between Christ and the Anabaptists in this matter may be easily shewn, but it may not be so easy to persuade people to attend to it. The world claims an absolute right of judging for itself in religion, and is so tenacious of its liberty, in this respect, that it does not choose to have it restricted even by God himself. But the world, and Christ's Church, are distinct societies, or bodies of men: And however the world may judge and act, it ought to be supposed that christians will judge and act according to the standard of their religion—the will of Christ made known in holy scripture. It will then be but fair to state the difference between Christ and the opposers of infant baptism; and, if christians will leave the better and follow the worse authority, there is no remedy that I know of—to their own master they stand or fall. He knows their prejudices and party attachments, and he will judge righteous judgment. Christ says, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." The Anabaptist says, little children cannot come to Christ in baptism. And there being no other way appointed, for them to come, therefore they cannot come at all. Christ says, "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child, he shall not enter therein." The Anabaptist says, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God, as a man or woman, he shall not enter therein. Christ says, that men or women cannot enter into the kingdom of God, except they become as infants; that is, approach, by repentance, as near as possible to their innocence and simplicity. The Anabaptist says, that infants must become as men and women; that is, be first defiled by actual sin, that they may exercise actual repentance—for innocence, it seems, is of no account—or they cannot enter into the kingdom of God. If you believe
Christ,

Christ, none but infants, or they whom repentance has brought to a resemblance of their innocency, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. If you believe the Anabaptist, none but full grown men and women can enter therein. Christ regards innocence, and its substitute repentance, as qualifications for baptism. The Anabaptist takes age and bulk of body into the account.—Choose now whom you will follow.

5. I have considered the terms, being brought to Christ, and coming to Christ, as meaning the same thing when applied to infants. The infants who are said to have been brought to Christ, are by him spoken of as coming to him. The very same expressions are also used by St. Matthew, in relating the same transaction.* By parity of reason, infants are properly said to come to baptism, or to come to Christ by baptism, when their parents or sureties bring them. But however they come, whether by their own strength, or by the strength of others, they were objects of Christ's attention, and as graciously regarded by him, as if they had been men and women. He took them up in his "arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them."

The strongest assertions that infants are incapable of repentance and faith, can here have no effect. Those infants did, on the faith of those who brought them, obtain the solemn blessing of Christ. And his blessing, I presume, was purely spiritual. It procured them neither wealth, nor honour, nor any worldly advantage—nothing but God's grace and Holy Spirit. To say it did not procure these, is to say, that Christ's blessing is a vain and insignificant ceremony. I conclude, therefore, that spiritual, as well as temporal blessings, may be procured for those who are incapable of transacting for themselves,

* Ch. xix. 13, 14.

selves, by the faith and application of others. Such is the goodness and mercy of God, whatever may be the opinion and conduct of some, who call themselves his Ministers.

Now, if the blessing of Christ did procure for those infants the grace and Holy Spirit of God, where is the absurdity of believing that baptism by Christ's appointment, and performed by his authorised minister, should procure the grace of regeneration, and the Holy Spirit for those infants, who come to it by the faith of their parents, or of those christians whose charity presents them at the holy sacrament? That the children of christian parents are as capable of receiving spiritual blessings from Christ, as those children were, who were brought to him, cannot be denied. And, we have a right to say, that the faith of christian parents will do as much for their children, as the faith of those, who brought the children to Christ, did for them. To deny this, is to set limits to the power, and goodness, and grace of God; to confine his Spirit within the circle of our ignorance; and bind him with the fetters of our prejudices.

6. Besides; to confine the advantage of baptism to those benefits, which arise from personal repentance and faith, is an error. Baptism is the sacrament of regeneration, by which we are born into the Church of Christ, made members of his body, and put under the guidance of his Spirit. That infants are capable of these benefits, appears from this consideration; that adults are incapable of them, till, by repentance, they become like little children.

7. I have before taken notice of the love which Christ shewed for infants—That he regarded their innocence with particular favour, appears from his making them a pattern for all others, who enter into
the

the kingdom of God—That he paid great attention to their interest, is evident from the caution he gave his disciples, not to offend them.* To offend any one, in the language of the New Testament, is to put a stumbling-block, or impediment in his way; to cause him to fall, or tempt him to turn away from his duty, and sin against God—more particularly, to prevent his embracing, or occasion his renouncing the faith of Christ. If it be a sin to neglect the ordinance which God has appointed to introduce men into his church, they who lay infants under a necessity of such neglect, are properly said to *offend* them. That there is an obligation on infants to be baptised, appears from their being included in the command of Christ to his apostles, to *baptise all nations*—from their capacity of regeneration, and from the necessity there is of their being born again, that they may enter into the kingdom of God. As they cannot apply for themselves, they lie at the mercy of their parents. What *their* punishment will be if they neglect their duty, must be left to God, the righteous judge of all men. It cannot be supposed that infants shall suffer for the omission of their parents, unless they continue it after they come to years of discretion, and have been in the way of proper information: but then, the parents' fault becomes their own. That God will receive to his mercy those infants who, through the fault of their parents, die in the state of innocence, without baptism, I firmly believe—for God is not confined by his ordinances, though we are—He may do more than he hath *promised*—we are bound to do all that he hath *cominanded*. In this sentiment, the Anabaptists must concur with me, or they could have no hope of happiness for those children, who die in their infant state. Let them, then, give some
reason

* Matt. xviii. 6.

reason why they suppose infants to be capable of admission into the kingdom of God, in the world to come, which is the highest sense of that phrase; and yet not capable of admission into the kingdom of God in this world, which is the lowest sense of it.

8. There are several expressions of the Prophets, which mention the coming in of the Gentiles to the Church of God in such a universal manner, that, without doing violence to them, we must suppose their full accomplishment is yet to come; and, that the time is approaching when, according to the determination of God, all the nations of the earth shall gladly obey his call, and come into the kingdom of Messiah. He is to "have the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession."* All the ends of the world shall be turned unto him, and "all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before him."† "All kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall do him service."‡ "The earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."§ Nay, "they shall all know the Lord, from the least of them, unto the greatest of them."|| That these prophecies, and several more of similar import, which might easily be collected, are not yet fulfilled, may be learned from St. Paul, who makes the coming in of the fulness of the Gentiles to the kingdom of Christ, the consequence, or at least, the concomitant of the coming in of the Jews.¶

When this glorious event comes to pass, and all "the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ," must all the infants of the world be excluded, as unqualified and unfit for the kingdom of Christ? They must either be in the kingdom of Christ, or out of it; for there is

VOL. I.

T

no

* Psa. ii. 8.

† xxii. 27.

‡ lxxii. 11.

§ Isa. xi. 9.

|| Jerem. xxxi. 34.

¶ Rom. xi.

no middle state. If they are in Christ's kingdom, they are in a state of salvation. If they are out of it, they are of the world, and God will deal with them as he sees right. It cannot, I think, be an extravagant supposition, to estimate infants at a fifteenth part of the inhabitants of any country: and, can we say those prophecies are fully accomplished, when so large a portion of mankind are shut out from the glorious privilege of being the children of God?

9. I have one remark more to make—When the Anabaptists first appeared, the christian church universal was in the full possession and practice of Infant Baptism. The universality of the practice shews that it was of apostolical institution. No other principle can account for it. To vilify this practice, and represent it as an innovation destructive of the Church of Christ, without being able to produce one text of scripture against it, or that can be made to discountenance it, unless by force and violence, is uncandid, unfair, and unchristian, and demands the serious consideration of every sensible man of the party. I know not how to account for it, but upon the principle that *nothing is to be done in the Church of Christ, but what is expressly commanded*. But, if this principle be true, the Anabaptists must not only exclude infants from the one sacrament, but women from the other.

The force of habit and the prejudices of education are seldom overcome by reason and argument. But, with people who are not under the influence of habitual prejudice, we may hope for a candid attention to what has been said on the subject of Infant Baptism. Where this is given, I persuade myself, that notwithstanding the positiveness, and dogmatical assurance of many of those who oppose it, it will appear that there is, not only sufficient

warrant

warrant in holy scripture for the practice, but that it is a duty as strongly enjoined by Christ, as if he had expressed it in direct terms. Noise, and clamor, and positive assertions can only influence the ignorant, or those whose passions are stronger than their understandings. Of their prejudices, or rectitude of conduct, we are not the judges—God is their master, and he will deal justly and graciously with them, and with all men. Our own principles and conduct are matters of more serious consequence to us; and, as we have the precious privilege of entering into Christ's Church, by the *washing of regeneration*, secured, not only to us, but to our infants; let us devoutly thank God for it, and religiously make use of it, by dedicating them to him in holy baptism, the first opportunity his providence shall give us—that being regenerate, they may also be renewed by the Holy Ghost,* and sanctified in body and mind to hear and obey the gospel of Christ. To this end, be it our care, as their capacities open, to instruct them in faith and knowledge; that they may understand what their baptismal vow and profession oblige them to believe and perform. And, let us remember, that our work does not end here; but, as they have been sanctified in baptism, they must be confirmed in faith, that they may be perfected in all divine graces—That passing their life here in holiness and obedience to God—in worshipping and serving him in the unity of his holy church, they may, when this life is ended, receive the heavenly inheritance, through his mercy and bounty who hath adopted them to be his children, and the heirs of all his gracious promises.

* Tit. iii. 5.

DISCOURSE V.

OF CONFIRMATION, OR LAYING ON OF HANDS.

HEB. vi. 2. — *And of laying on of hands—*

THE whole sentence from which the Text is taken, stands thus—"Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment—and this we will do, if God permit."

In the foregoing chapter, the Apostle had reproved the Hebrew Christians for their negligence in acquiring Christian knowledge; in which, it seems, they were so ignorant, that he was apprehensive they would not comprehend what his subject obliged him to say on the nature of the priesthood of Christ; nor see the force of the argument which he was about to adduce in favour of it, by proving that the priesthood of Christ was of the same order with that of Melchisedec, and consequently superior to that of Aaron. He compares them to children who must be fed with milk, because they cannot digest strong meat; and complains, that though, for the time they had been in the school of Christ, they ought to have been able to teach others

others the great doctrines of Christianity, they had need themselves to be taught again, "which be the first principles of the oracles of God." Not discouraged however by their negligence or dulness of apprehension, he was resolved to do his duty; and, with the permission and help of God, endeavour to instruct them in the nature and efficacy of the priesthood of Christ, lest their ignorance in those articles should prevent their reliance on his atonement for the remission of sins; and occasion their return to the Law and Institutions of Moses, as the surer ground on which to expect the mercy and forgiveness of God. "Therefore," saith he, "leaving the principles—the elements or rudiments, of the doctrine of Christ"—those things which are the foundation of all future instruction, and therefore first to be learned—"let us go on unto perfection," to the consideration of the higher mysteries, or sublimer doctrines of our holy religion. "Not laying again the foundation"—not stopping now to inculcate first principles, such as are the doctrine "of repentance from dead works"—works which deserve death, and will subject us to final condemnation; "and of faith towards God;" and "of the doctrine of baptisms"—for the remission of sins, and a new birth into the kingdom of God; "and of laying on of hands"—for the conferring of the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit of God; "and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment"—the great engines by which the hope of a heavenly inheritance is supported, and holiness of life enforced on Christians.

It is common to all arts and sciences to have some first or fundamental principles on which to build: And, whoever wishes to become well acquainted with any science must make himself master of those first principles; because, on them his further progress

gress depends. The fundamental principles of Christian knowledge, the Apostle has mentioned by name. They are six, repentance, faith, baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, eternal judgment. To speak in his stile, these are the milk of the word—proper food for novices or beginners in Christian doctrine; but without which as a foundation, its higher principles can neither be explained, nor understood.

It is not my design to consider all these Articles, but to confine myself to the one, to which the text relates—the “*laying on of hands.*” For since the holy Apostle has named *this* among the first principles of christianity, it becomes our duty to attend to it, and to inform ourselves of its meaning, nature, and design; that we may yield a reasonable and willing obedience to God, in complying with it.

We find in scripture that the rite of *laying on of hands* was practised on several occasions—in ordination of the clergy—in healing the sick—in conferring blessings. But neither of these can be that laying on of hands which the text mentions, because neither of these can be a fundamental principle of christianity. Fundamental principles must regard all christians, and be necessary for all; whereas, these instances of laying on of hands regard particular christians only. In ordination, which means the conferring of power, or giving a commission, the laying on of hands regards only the persons ordained: In healing the sick, only those who are healed: In conferring blessings, only those to whom the blessing is given. But, the laying on of hands, of which we now treat, is something in which all christians are concerned; as much as they are in repentance, faith, baptism, resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment.

There

There is, however, one other instance of laying on of hands mentioned in the New Testament, which seems to have been considered as necessary for all christians, and may therefore justly be esteemed a fundamental principle: And, as it was used after baptism, is most probably the very rite mentioned by St. Paul, in the text, which he places immediately after baptism, in his list of first principles of christianity. This is what in modern language is called *Confirmation*. We will, then, consider the particular instances of this *laying on of hands* which are mentioned in the New Testament; and see whether they will, not only justify the Church in retaining that ancient usage, but convince every one that it is an apostolical practice, and consequently of divine original; and that, therefore, it is our duty to comply with it.

In the eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we find, that when the joyful news of the conversion of the Samaritans reached the Apostles at Jerusalem, they sent two of their own number to Samaria, Peter and John, "who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost. (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them; only they were baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost."

It appears from this passage, that the administration of Confirmation pertained to the Apostles, as chief Governors of the Church, and was not given to the inferior clergy. Of course, it now belongs to the Bishops of the Church; they who have succeeded the Apostles in the powers of ordination and government; and is no part of the office of Presbyters or Deacons. That Philip was a Deacon of the Church we know; but we read not of his being advanced to any higher station. That he did
preach

preach and baptise we also know, and therefore conclude that preaching and baptising were part of the Deacon's office. That he could not administer the rite of Confirmation appears from the transaction under consideration. That was the business on which the Apostles Peter and John went from Jerusalem to Samaria, and the only business which the history takes notice of their performing, except the excommunication of Simon the forcerer, for his profane attempt to purchase with money the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, by the laying on of his hands. Now, if Philip had the power of Confirmation, it remains that the journey of the two Apostles be accounted for, on some other principle, consistently with the history.

In the nineteenth chapter of the Acts, we find another instance of Apostolical Confirmation, or laying on of hands, namely, the twelve disciples at Ephesus, on whom, "when Paul had laid his hands, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied."

These are the only direct instances of the administration of this rite in the New Testament, and these were by Apostolic hands, nor have we the least intimation that it was ever performed by any other. Indeed, the very meaning of the rite seems to confine it to the chief Governors of the Church. That the design of the rite is to confer the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, appears from St. Paul's asking the Ephesian converts, whether they had received the Holy Ghost, since they believed; and from the visible effects that followed the laying of his hands upon them. The modern term *Confirmation* is, I know, generally understood by people to mean no more than their ratifying and confirming the vow and profession they made, or that was made by others in their name, at their Baptism.

But in truth, this is but one part of the meaning even of that word. In that solemnity, there is not only the ratification of the baptismal vow made by those who are confirmed; but there is, on God's part, a ratification made, by his Authorised Minister, of the regeneration or adoption into God's family, and of the remission of sins, which they received in Baptism. There is also in Confirmation, a ratification of the baptisms performed by the inferior Clergy, made by the chief Minister of God's Church; and, if any thing has been done amiss, through ignorance or inadvertency, we humbly trust in the divine mercy and goodness, that it is therein remedied, and the Baptism rendered valid, and such as God will accept, and acknowledge.

The designation of this holy rite, by the word *Confirmation*, was not known in the primitive Church. They called it by its original name—*laying on of hands*; and sometimes denoted it by, *the sealing*, and *the anointing*; because this sacred ordinance was then administered by the Bishop's dipping the end of his finger in the holy Chrism, or consecrated ointment, and making the sign of the cross on the forehead of the person on whom he was about to lay his hands.

With respect to the Chrism, it was called *the anointing*. That the anointing with consecrated oil, or ointment, is emblematical of the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost, appears from so many instances and allusions in scripture, that we have no right to suppose any christian ignorant of it: And as the subject has already been under consideration, in the discourse on the apostolical commission, it will be unnecessary to say any thing more about it, in this place.

With respect to the sign of the cross made on the forehead of the person upon whom the Bishop was
about

about to lay his hands, this rite was called *the sealing*, referring to the original use of a seal, which was not only to secure letters from the intrusions of curiosity, but to mark a person's goods; by which means, his property could be ascertained to others, and claimed by himself. This making the sign of the cross on the forehead was, therefore, in its design, sealing the party with the seal, or mark of Christ, by which he knew and considered himself, and was declared to others, to be the soldier and servant of Jesus Christ, bound 'to fight manfully under his banner, against sin, the world, and the devil;' and to serve him in holiness and righteousness, in the unity of his church, to the end of his life.

There are several passages in the Apostolical Epistles which seem to have a direct allusion to this practice, and cannot be well explained without reference to it. "The anointing," saith St. John, "which ye have received of him, abideth in you—the same anointing teacheth you of all things;"* that is, the Holy Spirit of God which ye received from Christ, when ye were, at the laying on of hands, anointed with the holy Chrism, as an emblem of those blessed gifts and graces which ye then received—this Holy Spirit "abideth in you, and teacheth you of all things." And St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, speaking of hope, or trust in Christ, says, "In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise,"† &c. alluding, most probably, to the signing of the forehead with the cross, at the laying on of hands, after baptism, for the purpose of conferring the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, and confirming their hope and confidence in Christ, who

* 1 John ii. 27.

† Eph. i. 13.—See also ch. iv. 30. and 2 Cor. i. 22.

who had procured that blessed Spirit for them, which was then communicated to them, in such measure as God saw best.

It is commonly said, by those who reject the rite of Confirmation, that the laying on of hands was to procure the miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost, and that it ceased with the lives of the apostles. But this ought to be proved, as well as said. It is the very point in dispute, and no one has a right to assume it. Besides, I have proved from St. Paul, that laying on of hands is among the fundamental principles of Christianity; equally so with baptism, and therefore must be common to all christians. That miraculous gifts were sometimes conferred in Confirmation, is readily allowed. That they were always conferred, even when Confirmation was administered by the original apostles, does not appear. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are various, depending, both in kind and degree, on the good pleasure of God. While miraculous gifts were necessary for the propagation and establishment of our holy religion, God graciously gave them: when they had answered his purpose, he withdrew them. And it is just as good an argument against the present necessity of Christ's religion in the world, that the miraculous powers which attended its first publication have ceased; as it is against confirmation, that the miraculous gifts, which, in many cases, attended its first ministration, continue no longer. The operations of the Holy Spirit are not confined to miraculous powers. If they were, where miraculous powers are not, there the Holy Spirit cannot be. His gifts and graces are necessary for the sanctification of the heart, and for all the purposes of holy living; and as necessary now, as ever they were. We have, therefore, a right to conclude, that God gives them now, as well as he formerly did; and
by

by the same means too. For God is the same now that he formerly was, and his religion the same it was in the time of the first apostles.

We know that many of the first preachers of christianity were endued with various miraculous gifts, and that those gifts have ceased. Ought preaching to be laid aside, because the miraculous gifts which attended the first preachers have been withdrawn? If not, why should Confirmation be laid aside, because the miraculous gifts which sometimes accompanied its original administration no longer subsist? When the truth of Christ's religion had been established by miracles, and the holy scripture completed by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, God saw best to withdraw both those gifts, and to leave his church to his written word for the rule of its faith and practice. And to that Word I appeal for the doctrine of Confirmation, or laying on of hands—There we find it, among the first principles of our holy religion—He that hath eyes to see, let him see; and I pray God to give him a heart to understand, and a will to obey.

When we set up to judge of the efficacy or propriety of God's institutions, we step out of our line—We are no judges of either—to believe and to obey make the whole of our duty. Water, we know, has no natural power to wash away sin, or to initiate men into the Church of Christ: and yet God hath appointed Baptism with Water to be the channel or instrument of our regeneration, or new birth into his kingdom, by which, through the operation of his Spirit, we become members of Christ's body—to use the apostle's stile—"of his flesh and of his bones."* Scepticism may doubt, and philosophy may inquire, whether this be so. Faith will receive it, and piety submit to it, as the appointment of him

* Eph. v. 30.

him whose word is power, and who can as easily give efficacy to the water of baptism to wash away sin, as he did to the water of Jordan to wash away Naaman's leprosy.

Further; we know that of ourselves we are weak and frail, and unable to do the will of God. From holy scripture we learn, that our whole ability to think or to do that which is good comes from him. That informs us also, that God works in us by his Spirit. His Spirit is promised to his church through Christ its head; and, through him, the head, the Spirit, is shed on all his members. For, however it may be with the world at large, the Spirit animates christians only as they are members of that body of which Christ is the head. This is perfectly congruous to nature. In the natural body, the head animates and governs its own body, and every member of it; but only the members of its own body; not the members of another. And, as Christ appointed Baptism to be the sacrament of initiation into his church, by which we are made members of his body; so his apostles, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and in virtue of Christ's commission to govern and regulate his church, as his delegates, did practise *laying on of hands* upon those who had been baptised, as the means or rite of conveying the graces of the Holy Spirit to them. This has been fully proved; and, that this rite has continued in the church, from the time of the apostles to this day, might easily be proved from a number of primitive and modern authors. I shall only mention three of the old writers, and they shall be from different periods. As to modern times, the matter will not admit of a dispute.

About eighty years after St. John the Apostle, flourished Tertullian. He wrote upon Baptism, and expresses himself to this effect—'After baptism,

is the laying on of hands; by blessing and prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit, who graciously descends from the Father upon the bodies cleansed and blessed by baptism.* St. Cyprian lived sixty years after Tertullian. Speaking of the Samaritans, who had been converted and baptised by St. Philip, and confirmed by St. Peter and St. John, he says, ‘The same thing is done among us. They who are baptised are brought to the Rulers of the church, that by our prayer, and the laying on of our hands, they may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be perfected with the seal of the Lord.’† The testimony of St. Jerom, who lived in the fourth century, is full to the same point. Treating of Confirmation, he says, ‘If it be demanded where it is written’—that is—what authority of scripture there is for it—‘it is written in the Acts of the Apostles. But if there were no authority of scripture for it, yet the consent’—that is—practice—‘of all the world in this particular, is as good as a command.’

Should it be objected, that by ascribing the gift of the Holy Ghost to Confirmation, he seems to be excluded from Baptism; I answer, that it has been observed, in a former discourse, that the gifts of the Holy Ghost are intended for different purposes; and that his operation or energy is always according to the purpose for which he is given. In *Baptism*, he is given for the purpose of Regeneration—to effect that new birth by which we are born into the Church of Christ, obtain remission of all past sins, and a new nature: In *Confirmation*, he is given for the purpose of sanctification, or renovation of the heart in holiness. In Baptism, we are created anew in Christ Jesus, by the operation of the Holy Ghost: In Confirmation, the new creation is animated, and enabled to live according to its new nature, by the energy

* De Baptismo, c. 8.

† Epist. 73. ad Fubacianum.

energy of the same most Holy Spirit. As in the original creation of man, God made the body first, and then breathed into it the breath of life, to animate the body which he had made, and enable it to answer the purposes for which he designed it; so in our new creation, being buried with Christ in Baptism, we die to the former life of the old man, and rise again to a new life; and, in Confirmation, the Holy Ghost, as the principle of that regenerated, new, or spiritual life, is infused into us from above. In Baptism, we are made christians; but yet the new baptised is but an infant in Christ: In Confirmation, he is advanced to the rank of adults, and made a perfect man in Christ Jesus.

Thus, by the operation of the Holy Ghost* in Baptism and Confirmation, we are created anew in Christ Jesus, are made the sons of God, and receive the spirit of adoption—the right and privilege of calling God, Father: and of consequence, are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of the heavenly inheritance. For this Spirit which dwelt in Jesus,† and raised him from the dead, dwelling in our mortal body, shall raise it up, at the last day;‡ and clothing

* This Spirit, in 1 John iii. 9, is called *the seed of God*; that is, the vivifying principle of life and holiness which God gives. For as the principle of natural life is in the seed, so is this Spirit the principle of the spiritual life. And as from this principle of life in the seed, all trees, &c. grow up to their full perfection, and answer the end for which God created them; so shall we, if we depart not from the principle of our spiritual life, grow up in holiness, and answer the end God intended by our new creation—be made fit for his heavenly kingdom. For while this seed or principle of life remaineth in full force and vigour, that is, unobstructed by any perverse turning away from its influence, the happy person *cannot sin*—cannot live in habits of sin—*because he is born of God*, and the seed of God, which sinneth not, remaineth in him.

† When Jesus was baptised, and not before, the Holy Ghost descended on him, to fit him for executing the offices which were committed to him.

‡ Rom. viii. 11.

clothing it with that spiritual body which is our house from heaven; * shall, after the general judgment, exalt both soul and body to the kingdom of heaven.

There is the same necessity why the new life we acquire in baptism should be supported and continued, as there is why it should be begun. The beginning and continuance of life are different things. To be born into this world, or begin the life of this world, by our natural birth, is one thing: to live in this world, and increase in strength, and grow up to man's estate, is another. In like manner, to be born into the kingdom of God, and to grow up in it to the stature of perfect men in Christ Jesus, are different things. Every life must be continued by something congenial to it, and proper to support it. For the support of our natural life, God has provided the air and food of this world. But, if any person be so perverse, that he will neither breathe nor eat, he must die. God, too, has provided support for that life which is begun at our new birth in baptism. Analogous to the air of this world, in our natural life, is the Holy Ghost; for by his holy inspirations is the spiritual life maintained, even as our natural life is maintained by breathing the natural air. Analogous to the food of this world for the body, is the food provided in God's Church for the soul, or spiritual life. This food consists of all the objects of faith—all those divine truths which God has revealed. For faith is truly the hunger of the soul, or spiritual man; that is, it is that to the soul, which hunger is to the body. Hunger excites and enables us to receive natural food, for the support of our natural life. Faith excites and enables the soul to receive the divine truths which God has re-

VOL. I.

X

vealed,

* 2 Cor. v. 2.

vealed, for the support of our spiritual life. When there is no natural hunger, the body becomes weak, and languid, and diseased, and death at length ensues. The same thing happens to the soul, with respect to the spiritual life, where the cravings of faith are never felt.

Besides those truths which God has revealed, he has been pleased to add *Positive Institutions* to his religion. This has ever been the case, from the time of Adam to this day. The reason is plain. Man consists of two parts, body, and soul or spirit. A religion accommodated to his nature must consist also of two parts. It must have external institutions to affect his body, and inward truths and realities to affect his soul or spirit. External, positive institutions, properly speaking, are the instruments of religion. Under the influence of faith, they are to the soul, what hands, and mouth, and stomach are to the body—they enable it to take, and eat, or receive, and digest its proper food, by which means the spiritual life is kept in vigour, and continually growing in strength.

These external institutions, or instruments, are especially four—Baptism, Confirmation, Bodily and Social Worship, and the Holy Eucharist. By the first, our new and spiritual life is begun: by the second, it is strengthened, and we are made adult members of Christ: by the third, we recognise God as the creator, governor, and preserver of the world; and as being *our* God, and Father: by the fourth, we receive that spiritual, life-giving body and blood of Christ, which he gave for the redemption of the world,* and which cleanseth us from all sin.† The first and last of these, on account of the positive command and institution of Christ, have been distinguished by the name of *Sacraments* of his Church; that

* John vi. 51, &c.

† 1 John i. 7.

that is, *Mysteries*; because, under outward and visible signs or emblems, they exhibit inward and spiritual grace.

This provision hath our gracious God made for us in his Church. If we use it as we ought, we shall grow up "like green olive trees in the house of God."* Passing through the vale of this miserable world, we shall be refreshed with the pure streams of divine grace, which flow continually from the Holy Spirit of God, the great fountain of consolation; and, in his strength, shall we find strength, to go on from one degree of holiness to another, till we come to the presence of God, in the heavenly Sion. † But, if we reject the food which he hath provided for the support of our spiritual life, we shall wither, and become like the dead branches of an unfruitful tree, fit only to be gathered up and burned. ‡

The great lesson which man has to learn is that of obedience and submission to God—to be ready to do every thing which God requires, and to forbear every thing which he hath forbidden. And his great duty consists in the exercise of penitence, by which he forsakes sin, and approaches as near as possible to a state of innocency. The foundation of both is faith. Unless he believes that God has commanded or forbidden a thing, his doing it, or refraining from it, however right in itself, is not obedience to God: And, without a belief of the goodness and mercy of God—that he will accept us, though sinners, and forgive us our offences, we could not repent at all. Sorrow for our sins we might have; but not that godly sorrow which worketh repentance; for that is built on a sense of God's mercy through Christ. Like worldly sorrow,

it

* Psa. liii. 9.

† lxxxiv. 6, 7.

‡ John xv. 6.

it would work death; for it would end in despair, and never bring forth the fruits of holiness.*

To beget, and perfect these dispositions it is, that we are called into the Church of Christ, and put under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Our very capacity of goodness of every kind we owe to the merciful interposition of our Redeemer. And, in truth, all that we can do towards our own salvation, is not to resist or counteract what God does for us by his Holy Spirit. If we think a good thought, it is by his inspiration. If we have a good wish, it is from his influence. If we do a good action, to him we owe both the intention, and the ability to perform it. "There is none good but one, that is God."† Therefore, every thing that is good must be from God.

Hence appears the necessity of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us; and, of our doing every thing that God directs, in order to obtain it. For this purpose, his holy Apostles have instituted the rite of laying on of hands, as one of the first principles of our religion, and require our compliance with it, that we may, by God's mercy, obtain the gifts and graces of his Holy Spirit, by the hands of his Authorised Minister, in such kind and degree, as he sees best for us. But, it is to be remembered, that in order to obtain the benefits of any ordinance, its observance must be accompanied by those dispositions of heart which are represented or signified by the ordinance. For example; Baptism represents and signifies a death unto sin, as well as a new birth unto righteousness. To obtain the new birth unto righteousness, we must therefore come to baptism with true penitence for all our past sins, and with hearty resolution to live in all holiness for the time to come. To apply this to Confirmation: The laying

* 2 Cor. vii. 10.

† Matt. xix. 17.

laying on of hands represents and signifies the dominion, protection and guidance of the Holy Spirit. We must, therefore, come to Confirmation with a willing disposition to live in subjection to the Spirit of God, to abide ever under his most holy protection, and to follow his heavenly guidance in all things. The same penitence must therefore be necessary in Confirmation, that is necessary in Baptism—the same firm faith in the promises of God—the same renunciation of every thing that stands in opposition to him; the devil and his works, the world with its vanities and extravagancies, and all the wicked tempers it produces, and all the evil desires and appetites of the body. It is also evident, that the ordinance requires a hearty desire to be made partakers of the Holy Spirit, and a firm belief that God will give and continue to us his heavenly grace, to preserve us pure and undefiled in this naughty world, to strengthen our good purposes, and enable us to bring them to good effect, by living in obedience to God, to the end of our lives.

From what has been said, it will appear, that as Baptism, according to Christ's institution, is the grand pre-requisite to Confirmation; so the qualifications are the same for Confirmation with those for the Baptism of such as are of riper years.

The benefits to be expected by those who come to Confirmation with proper dispositions, are the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit in an increased degree, to renew and sanctify them in heart and spirit; to enable them to fulfil their christian duty, by “living godly, righteously, and soberly in this present world.” In Confirmation they also receive a public testimony of God's favour and goodness to them: For, by his Minister, he declares his acceptance of their proficiency in christian faith and knowledge;

knowledge; advances them to the higher rank of the faithful; and gives them a right to approach his holy Table, and partake with his children of the memorials of the body and blood of Christ his Son, broken and poured out for the salvation of sinners. It, therefore, becomes their duty to remember the holy profession they have made and ratified, and not to dishonour it by a wicked life, nor desert it by departing from the unity of the church; but to continue in communion with those Ecclesiastical Superiors, by whose ministry they have received so precious a gift—Not to “grieve the Holy Spirit whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption;”^{*} but to shun the pollutions of the world, and be holy in all manner of conversation; as he who hath called, and sanctifieth them to be his children, is holy: Remembering that their bodies are the temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them:† And that if they destroy the purity of this temple, God will destroy them. But, if they abide under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and obey his inspirations, they shall, through him, abound in fruits of goodness, and righteousness, and truth, and grow up from one degree of holiness to another, till they come to the full measure of the stature of Christ; and are fitted for the inheritance of the sons of God, in the kingdom of their heavenly Father.

There seems to be an opinion prevailing with many, which, probably, prevents their compliance with the institutions of religion, more than any thing else—namely, That while they refrain, they may freely indulge themselves in many things, which would be inconsistent with the obligations which those institutions imply. But, in this opinion, several mistakes or false suppositions are contained.

It

^{*} Eph. iv. 30. † 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17.

It supposes that a man may live innocently, and be good enough, though he live in constant disobedience to God. It supposes, also, that a compliance with the ordinances of religion lays new duties upon him, or makes that unlawful for him, which before was not so, and those practices sinful which before were innocent. But neither of these suppositions are true. He that lives in disobedience to God, lives in a state of sin: For, sin is neither more nor less than disobedience to God. And, with regard to the other supposition—Though it be acknowledged, that the ordinances of religion furnish new motives for doing our duty, and supply new strength to perform it; yet our compliance with them increases neither the number nor magnitude of our duties. What can be done consistently with a good conscience, may always be done; and what cannot be so done, ought never to be done; whether we comply with the ordinances of religion or not. For instance; it is a man's duty to renounce the devil and his works, the world and its wicked tempers, and the evil appetites and passions of his nature, whether he be baptised or not.

Another false supposition contained in the above opinion is, that the ordinances of religion are mere arbitrary institutions, of no value in themselves, but merely to shew God's sovereign power over us. That they are *arbitrary institutions*, in this sense, (that they depend entirely on the will of God; and that, for any thing we know, he might have omitted these, and have appointed others) is readily granted. It is also acknowledged, that had he not appointed them, there would have been no virtue nor goodness in them. But, it is denied, that they are instances of his sovereignty intended to increase the burden of our duty, or to render more strait the narrow way that leadeth unto life. They are intended

intended to be privileges and blessings to us—to put us in that narrow way, and to keep us in it—to make it more plain and easy to us; and to strengthen and refresh us in our progress in it. He that refuseth them, refuseth his own good, and turns away from blessings which God holds out to him.

That it is a privilege to be admitted into God's family, and made one of his children, and an heir of the heavenly inheritance, no one, who has seriousness to think about it, can doubt. This privilege we obtain by Baptism. The wilful rejection of Baptism, therefore, put into plain language is—I will not be one of God's family, nor one of his children—I like this world and its enjoyments, which religion marks as extravagant, too well to give them up; and, I find too much gratification in my appetites and passions, to put them under restraint. And as to the works of the devil, they have a bad name it is true, but I see no great harm in them—In short, let them seek for a heavenly inheritance who choose it: This world, and the life it inspires, is enough for me; and I am determined to enjoy as much of it as I can.

With regard to Confirmation, the wilful refusal of it comes much to the same thing—It amounts to a declaration, that they want not God's assistance, and choose not to be under the government and protection of his Spirit. That their parents had them baptised in their infancy, but they care nothing about the matter, and do not choose to confirm that renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that was made in their name; but to be left to their own disposal, to seek their happiness in their own way, without regarding the directions of God, or availing themselves of those advantages which his mercy and goodness has provided for them.

These

These are matters worthy of serious reflection, and no man can acquit himself of folly, who does not seriously attend to them. To feel the service of God to be a burden, or his institution a restraint to which he is unwilling to submit, argues a depravity of heart that is a reproach to any one; and which few people, however they may deserve it, would quietly endure to have imputed to them. How foolish, then, is it to live in a state which can be accounted for, on no other principle, unless it be a worse one! "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

I think you matters worthy of serious reflection
and no man can acquit himself of folly, who does
not seriously attend to them. To feel the force of
God to be a burden, or his indignation a restraint
in which he is unwilling to submit, argues a de-
gree of heart that is a reproach to any one; and
with few people, however they may deceive it,
would easily endure to have inquired of them,
How foolish, then, is it to live in a state which can
be accounted for, on no other principle, unless it
be a word, and! He that has ears to hear, let
him hear.

DISCOURSE VI.

OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST.

LUKE xxii. 19. —*This do in remembrance of me.*

THIS command of our Blessed Redeemer is so positive, that it must be supposed to lay the strongest obligation on all who are concerned in it, to pay a punctual obedience to it. It is, therefore, our duty to inform ourselves, as exactly as may be, of its true meaning, that our obedience may be the obedience of reasonable men, and not the effect of ignorant superstition.

The text relates to the institution of the *Holy Sacrament* of the Body and Blood of Christ—the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Christian Church—and must be interpreted agreeably to the nature and design of that holy ordinance. However plain the words may appear to people, who judge of them by the principles in which they have been educated, or which they have adopted upon after reflection; the various discordant, and contradictory interpretations, which the different sects of christians have put on them, evidently prove that there are difficulties in the understanding of them. The Papist, the Lutheran, the Calvinist, the Socinian, all differ in their opinions on this subject—all appeal to Holy Scripture, and are all sure they are right, and that they who differ from them are wrong. This happens

pens because they all construe the words of institution by principles previously adopted, or in which they have been bred; and are, possibly, less careful to examine their principles, and correct them where they are wrong, than to seek out such interpretations of scripture, as shall, apparently at least, comport with their own preconceived system.

In this unhappy diversity of sentiment, the best resource seems to be in the doctrines, and principles, and practice of the *Primitive Apostolical Church*, in its first and purest ages, before Popery, or Lutheranism, or Calvinism, or Socinianism had a being. We shall there find a clue to lead us through the labyrinth, in which the errors and contradictions of modern Churches and contending sects have so miserably involved us.

It is not to the doctrines or principles of particular men, or of single Churches, that prudence will direct us to repair. Particular men may have had their particular tenets; and single Churches may, in some things, have departed from apostolical practice. But, the testimony of the Universal Church cannot deceive us. That which was taught and practised in all considerable Churches, in all parts of the world, and at all times, for the first four or five hundred years, and the origin of which cannot be traced up to some Council, must be by Apostolical Authority.

Without this testimony of the Church, it is impossible to prove the Canon of the New Testament, or to establish the authority of any one Book in it: and surely, there can be no absurdity in relying on the testimony of the Primitive Church to ascertain the nature and design of the Holy Eucharist, when we are obliged to rely on her testimony for the very records of its institution; nor, in supposing, that she did rightly understand the mind and will of the
holy

holy Apostles, from whom she received those records, and by whose doctrine and practice she had been instructed in the true meaning of them.

If it be the duty of Christians to preserve the unity of Christ's Church, it must be their duty to pay a due regard to primitive doctrine, practice, and interpretation of scripture. For, if every particular church, sect, and person claim a right of construing the sacred writings according to their own fancy, it is impossible but that diversity and contrariety must arise among them. Expressions of Scripture will be forced, and misapplied, and perverted to countenance positions contrary to its general spirit and meaning; discordant schemes of government, doctrines, worship, and sacraments will be maintained; unity and faith will be lost in contention, and truth will not be easily found.

In some instances, most Christians pay a regard to the testimony and practice of the Primitive Church; in others, they entirely neglect them. When our Saviour instituted the Holy Communion, none were present but the twelve Apostles; and, from any thing that was then done, it does not certainly appear, that any were concerned in the command, but the Apostles and their Successors. Yet, no Church, that I know of, excludes the laity from the Communion; though (the practice of the Primitive Church excepted) they have no direct authority for their admission. All that can be alledged from scripture, in favour of lay-communion, may be explained away in the same manner, in which the Presbyterians explain away Episcopal Government; the Anabaptists infant baptism; the Socinians the divinity of Christ; and the Quakers the sacraments and priesthood of the Christian Church. And when those Christian sects, who retain the Institution, come to explain its nature and design, they

they differ widely in their sentiments, though they have the scripture before them, and all profess to be governed by it—One teaching, that the bread and the cup are, by the Priest's repeating the words of Christ, "This is my body; this is my blood," over them, converted, or transubstantiated into the natural body and blood of Christ—that very body and blood which he assumed in the womb of the Virgin, and which suffered on the cross. Another denies transubstantiation, and affirms that the bread and wine are not changed into the natural body and blood of Christ, upon the Minister's pronouncing, "This is my body; this is my blood;" but only that the body and blood of Christ are thereby consubstantially united to the bread and wine. A third teaches, that, upon the repetition of those words, no alteration at all is made in the bread and wine; but, that they are only made, or designated to be memorials or symbols of Christ's body and blood; on the receiving of which, the souls of believers, by, and through the energy of their own faith, receive spiritually the flesh and blood of Christ, are made partakers of the benefits of his passion; and of that Holy Spirit with which his humanity was anointed. Lastly; some, who call themselves Christians, do consider the bread and wine merely as remembrances to put us in mind of the death of Christ, and seem to require no qualifications in the recipients, but to remember, at the instant, that Christ died on the cross, to attest the truth of the doctrines he taught—nor do they appear to expect either grace or remission of sins, from this holy sacrament.

Attentive consideration will, I trust, convince us, that neither of these opinions is reconcileable with the institution of the sacred ordinance; and a very moderate acquaintance with primitive christianity will

will make us sensible, that neither of them can be reconciled to the sentiments, which the first christians entertained of it.

The first thing that presents itself to our inquiry is the meaning of the command, *Do this*. Some understand the expression merely of eating and drinking the sacramental elements. Should this be admitted with regard to the *bread*, it cannot be admitted with regard to the *cup*: And as the command must, in all reason, be understood in the same sense with regard to them both, it cannot be admitted with regard to either of them. St. Paul, giving an account of the institution, has this expression with respect to the cup—"This do ye as oft as ye drink it."* Now, if the sense of the words, *this do ye*, be, *Drink this cup*, then the phrase will run thus, *Drink ye this cup as oft as ye drink it*—a sense which no reasonable man will adopt. Indeed, no interpretation which does not apply to the whole transaction, can be received as the true interpretation of the command, *This do*, &c. It cannot, therefore, be restrained to eating the bread and drinking the wine, but must comprehend the whole institution. As Christ took bread and blessed and brake it, and gave it to his Apostles, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: This do, in remembrance of me"—And also the cup; first giving thanks, and then giving it to them, saying, "Drink ye all of this; for this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins: This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me:"† So his Apostles were, by his command and authority, to do as he had done—Take bread and

* 1 Cor. xi. 25.

† Compare Matt. xxvi. 26, 27, 28. Mark xiv. 22, 23, 24. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Cor. xi. 23, 24, 25.

and wine and bless them with thanksgiving, and divide them among the faithful, for a memorial of him. Less than this will not come up to the meaning of the expression, "This do in remembrance of me."

Having thus seen the process of the institution; let us next attend to the effect of what Christ said or did on this solemn occasion; and try, whether, thence we cannot get some insight into the nature of the Holy Ordinance.

When Christ had blessed the bread and wine with thanksgiving and prayer, he declared them to be his *body and blood, given* for his Apostles and for many, for the remission of sins. The Church of Rome, in her prayer of Consecration, has given a future meaning to the Greek *διδόμενον*—which *shall* be given. But, the participle of the preterite passive cannot express future time: nor can any mode of speech more strongly denote time present—which is *now* given. There is, therefore, no ground, from Christ's words, to infer any transubstantiation, or conversion of the bread and wine into his natural body and blood, by his pronouncing the words, "This is my body; this is my blood," over them. His natural body and blood were then present—his body unbroken—his blood unshed—and absolutely distinct from the bread and wine; for, in his natural hands he held the bread and the cup, even when he declared them to be his body and blood *then* given for the remission of sins. And if those words, when pronounced by Christ, did not change the bread and the cup into the natural body and blood of Christ, no such effect is to be expected from them, when pronounced by a Priest,

That there was, however, a great and real change made in the bread and the cup by our Saviour's blessing, and thanksgiving, and prayer, cannot be doubted.

doubted. Naturally they were only bread and wine, and not the body and blood of Christ. When he had blessed them, he declared them to be his body and blood. They were, therefore, by his blessing and word, made to be what by nature they were not.

That Christ offered himself—his natural body and blood—his humanity—to God, a sacrifice for the sin of the world, will, I presume, be readily acknowledged to be a scripture doctrine. But, as the scripture has not, in direct terms, told us when he did so, it becomes a matter of inquiry when it was done. I know it is commonly said that he *offered* himself on the cross. But, however common the opinion may be, it does not appear to me to have either scripture or fact to support it. That he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, and that he was once offered to bear the sins of many, are expressions of scripture.* But I know not that it is said in scripture, that Christ *offered himself* on the cross. As far as I can perceive, the representation which the scriptures give of the fact, is directly against such an opinion. From the time that Judas entered the garden of Christ's agony, every thing has the appearance of force and constraint. By force, the armed band which attended the traitor, seized on Jesus, and led him away to the unrighteous tribunals of the High Priest and Roman Governor. By force, his blessed head was torn with thorns, and his sacred back flayed with scourging. By force, he was led to mount Calvary, bearing his own cross, till fainting through weakness, another was compelled to carry it for him. By force, he was nailed to the accursed tree, and lifted up on high for the salvation of the world. By force, the gall and vinegar were applied to his holy lips, and the

VOL. I.

Z

fatal

* 1 Pet. ii. 24. Heb. ix. 28.

fatal spear pierced his immaculate side. And, though he could have struck his enemies dead with his word, as easily as he felled them to the ground, when they came to apprehend him; or, could have commanded legions of Angels to his rescue; yet he chose to drink the bitter cup of God's justice and indignation against sin, and yielded himself up to the brutal force of his merciless persecutors, and quietly permitted them to wreak their utmost vengeance on him. Nor, had Christ *offered himself on the cross*, do I see how what he there endured could be called his *passion*, a word which the Church hath always used to denote his *crucifixion*.

It being admitted that Christ did *offer* himself—his natural body and blood—his whole humanity—to God, a sacrifice for the sin of the world; and, having been shewn, that he did not offer himself on the cross, but was, in every thing that related to his crucifixion, merely passive; it may be asked, When did he offer himself? I answer, In the institution of the Holy Eucharist. And, though I do not say this is declared in express terms; yet, I am confident, a careful attention to what he then did and said, will put the matter out of doubt to every candid and unbiassed mind.

That the sacrifice of the Redeemer, for the sin of the world, should be perfectly free and voluntary, seems necessary to give full effect to the divine plan of Redemption. Accordingly, the sufferings of Messiah, as foretold by the Prophets, were always represented as being willingly undertaken, and patiently endured by him. Isaiah mentions him, as having “poured out his soul unto death.”* Holy David also describes him, as voluntarily submitting to the will of God, and freely becoming an expiatory sacrifice for sin—“Burnt-offering,

* Isa. liii. 12.

offering, and sin-offering," that is, those that were offered by the law, "hast thou not required," to take away the sin of the world. "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God."* In like manner, whenever the Apostles speak of the sacrifice of Christ, they speak of it as his *voluntary and free act* for the sake of apostate man. They represent him as *giving himself* for sin—to be a sin-offering—a ransom for the souls of all men.†—Though, therefore, the determination, that Christ should suffer the penalty of man's disobedience, was ever in the divine counsel; and he is, on that account, said to be a lamb slain from the foundation of the world;‡ yet, as it pleased the Almighty Father, that he should, in the fulness of time, take human nature upon him, that he might be capable of dying for sin; and, as his human nature was to be the sacrifice, and this sacrifice was to be voluntary; it seems necessary that his human nature should be voluntarily offered up to endure that death which God had determined to accept as the atonement for sin; that every appearance of constraint might be avoided; that the justice of God might appear, in his exacting the penalty of sin from the same nature in Christ, which had offended in Adam; and might be vindicated from all suspicion of laying the sin of man on an innocent person against his will.

When, therefore, the end of his personal ministry here on earth approached; knowing that all things which the counsel of God had determined concerning him were about to be fulfilled, according to the predictions of the Prophets; being at his own disposal, and perfectly free from all constraint; having just obeyed the law by celebrating the

* Psa. xl. 6, 7, 8. † 1 Tim. ii. 6. Gal. i. 4. Tim. ii. 14.

‡ Rev. xiii. 8.

the Passover, and thereby fulfilling an eminent type and prefiguration of his own sacrifice and death—He began to fulfil the divine decree by *offering up himself* for the sins of the world; which offering was fully completed and rendered effectual, when he yielded up his life on the cross.

As he could not wound and kill his own natural body, and shed his own blood, he made this offering in a *Mystery*, that is, under the *Emblems of Bread and Wine*. Therefore he took bread, and having blessed and consecrated it to be his representative body, he brake it, to signify and represent the wounding, and piercing of his body on the cross, which was then soon to happen: also, the cup of wine and water mixed, to signify and represent the blood and water which flowed from his dead body on the cross, when the soldier pierced his precious side. These offerings of his body and blood, under the symbols of bread and wine, though making but one offering of his humanity, were separately made; because his body and blood were thereby, not only, devoted to be, but were considered as broken, and poured out for the sin of the world.

When it is considered that *offerings* are, in scripture, frequently called *gifts*; and that to bring gifts, and make offerings to God, are equivalent expressions; there can be no doubt but that the expression, “this is my body which is given for you,” is just the same with, “this is my body which is offered for you.”

The truth of this position, that Christ, under the emblems, or symbols of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist, *offered*, or *gave* his natural body and blood for the sin of the world, will further appear from considering the person to whom the offering was made. This Person could be none other than the Almighty Father. For to whom

was

was satisfaction made for the sin of the world, by the death of Christ, but to him, to whose justice all men stood exposed on account of sin? To whom, then, should the offering be made, but to him, to whom the satisfaction to be made by the offering was due? When, therefore, Christ said to his apostles—"Take, eat," &c. we are to understand him in the following sense—"Take, eat—this bread broken, and now given to you, is the memorial, or representative of my body which is, under this emblem, now given, offered, devoted to God, for you. This do—continue to do as I have done, and thereby make this memorial of me and what I now do, when I am gone from you. And, drink ye all of this cup; for this cup is the memorial or representative of my blood, which is now, under this emblem, devoted and offered to God, as shed for you, and for many, for the remission of sins—Do as I have now done, as often as ye make this memorial of me."

I shall offer but one consideration more in support of the opinion that Christ, in the institution of the Eucharist, did offer himself to God, a propitiatory sacrifice for sin; and that shall be taken from the prayer which he made, on that solemn occasion. This prayer, or at least so much of it as the Holy Ghost hath thought proper to have recorded for our instruction, is contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The first five verses are an earnest supplication, that both his own glory, and the glory of his Father, might be manifested in the perfect obedience of his humanity, and in his consequent exaltation. From the sixth to the twenty-fourth verse, he makes intercession for his apostles; that they might be preserved in love, and through the participation of the Holy Spirit might be united, not only with each other, but with him,

him, and through him, with the Father: and, that being preserved from the evil one, and sanctified by the Spirit, they might be enabled faithfully to preach the truth, and make known the mystery of salvation to the world. The remainder of the chapter is a prayer for all those who, through the ministry of his apostles and their successors, should believe in him, that they might continue in faith and love, and being united in the Spirit might live in peace and righteousness of life. In the supplications for his apostles, there is this expression, “and for their sakes I *sanctify* myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth”*—or truly sanctified. I ask, in what sense could Christ *sanctify* himself, or make himself *holy*? He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated, by holiness of nature, from sin and from sinners.† His holiness, in this sense, could admit of no addition. It remains, then, that we understand this phrase, “I *sanctify* myself,” in another sense—a sense, in which it is used in scripture; and that is, to devote, consecrate, or offer himself to God for sin. In Deuteronomy‡ there is this direction, “all the firstling males that come of thy herd, and of thy flock, thou shalt sanctify unto the Lord”—That the word *sanctify* here means to *offer in sacrifice* appears from hence, that if the firstling had any blemish, it was forbidden to be *sacrificed*, but was to be eaten as common food. In the first book of the Chronicles,§ it is said, that “Aaron was separated, that he should sanctify the most holy things—to burn incense before the Lord,” &c. where to *sanctify* must mean to *offer in sacrifice*; for, if we turn to the book of Exodus,|| we shall find that the end for which Aaron was taken and separated from the children of Israel, is thus assigned

* John xvii. 19. † Heb. vii. 26. ‡ Deut. xv. 19, 21, 22.

§ Ch. xxiii. 13.

|| Ch. xxviii. 1.

assigned by God, "That he may minister unto me in the priests office." In this sense is our Saviour to be understood when he says, "For their sakes, I sanctify myself;" that is, for their sakes, I offer, or devote myself, an expiatory sacrifice to God. The verb *ἁγιάζω*, *I sanctify*, being in the present tense, expresses present action; and, as this prayer was made by Christ at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, the consequence is, that he did then *offer* and *devote* himself to God. So that this expression in Christ's prayer, "For their sakes, I *sanctify* myself," contains just the same sentiment with what he said to his apostles, when he delivered the consecrated bread to them, "This is my body which *is given* for you."*

It having now been proved, that Christ did, at the institution of the Eucharist, offer his natural body and blood to God, an expiatory sacrifice for sin, under the symbols and representation of bread broken, and wine poured out, and consecrated by blessing and thanksgiving; and, his apostles being commanded to *do this*, that is, what he had done, in remembrance of him; I ask, in what sense can this command be understood, but as an injunction on them, *to offer* bread broken, and wine poured out, and consecrated by blessing and thanksgiving, to

* Though my subject does not require my pursuing this matter further, yet it may be of use to remark, that there is another sense in which *to sanctify*, as a sacrificial term, is used in scripture; and that is, *to purify, or cleanse from sin by sacrifice*. In this sense is the word used with regard to the Apostles in this place, John xvii. 19.—*that they also might be sanctified through the truth*—The sense of the whole verse is, For their sakes I offer myself an expiatory sacrifice for sin, that, through my expiation, they may be truly sanctified—cleansed from sin—and consecrated to God, to preach the gospel—the word of truth to the world—For then follows Christ's prayer for those who should believe on him, through their ministry. See Whitby on Heb. ii. 11. word *ἁγιάζων*.

to God, as symbols of Christ's body and blood, and for a representation, or memorial of his offering his natural body and blood to God, which he then made under the same representation? Less than this does not come up to the force of the command, *This do*—Do as I have now done, *in remembrance of me*; or rather, for my memorial—for a memorial of me—*ὡς τὴν ἑμὴν ἀνάμνησιν.*

Hence it will follow, that the Eucharist is not only a memorial of the passion and death of Christ for the sin of the world, but also of that offering of himself—his natural body and blood—which, under the representation of bread and wine, he made to God at the institution of the holy ordinance. In this respect it exactly fulfils its type, the ordinance of the Jewish Passover. For that was not only a memorial of the deliverance of the Israelites from the bondage of Egypt, in the night when God slew the Egyptian first-born; but also, a memorial of the original Passover in Egypt, under the protection of the blood of which put upon the posts of their doors, they remained in safety, when the first-born of the Egyptians were slain.

Hence, also, it appears, that the Eucharist is a memorial made, not so much before men, as before the Almighty Father. For, before whom should the memorial of the offering and death of Christ be made, but before him to whom the offering and death of Christ was a sacrifice for sin? If the offering was made to God, as has been proved, the memorial of that offering must also be made before God, or it ceases to be a proper memorial. For a memorial is a monument or sensible sign intended to bring some event to remembrance: And the Eucharist being the memorial of Christ's offering himself to God, and of his passion and death for sin; it follows, that the memorial of his offering and death

death must be made before God, that by it their merit and efficacy may be pleaded with him, for the remission of sin, and for all other benefits and blessings which his passion and death procure for us.

In this respect, too, the Eucharist fulfils its type, the Jewish Passover. The memorial made by that, was a memorial made before God, by the people of Israel, as appears from their being commanded to *eat it before the Lord*; for if it were eaten or celebrated before the Lord, then the memorial made by it was made before the Lord.

It appears, therefore, that the Eucharist is not only a sacrament, in which, under the symbols of bread and wine, according to the institution of Christ, the faithful truly and spiritually receive the body and blood of Christ; but also, a true and proper sacrifice, commemorative of the original sacrifice and death of Christ for our deliverance from sin and death—a memorial made before God, to put him in mind; that is, to plead with him the meritorious sacrifice and death of his dear Son, for the forgiveness of our sins, for the sanctification of his church, for a happy resurrection from death, and a glorious immortality with Christ in heaven.

From this account, the Priesthood of the Christian Church evidently appears. As a Priest, Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God, in the mystery of the Eucharist; that is, under the symbols of bread and wine; and he commanded his apostles to do as he had done. If his offering were a sacrifice, theirs was also. His sacrifice was original, theirs commemorative. His was meritorious through his merit who offered it; theirs drew all its merit from the relation it had to his sacrifice and appointment. His, from the excellency of its own nature, was a true and sufficient propitiation for the sins of the whole world; theirs procures remission of sins only through the reference it has to his atonement.

When Christ commanded his apostles to celebrate the Holy Eucharist, in remembrance of him, he, with the command, gave them power to do so; that is, he communicated his own priesthood to them, in such measure and degree as he saw necessary for his church—to qualify them to be his representatives—to offer the christian sacrifice of bread and wine, as a memorial before God the Father of his offering himself once for all; of his passion and of his death—to render the Almighty propitious to us for his sake; and as a means of obtaining, through faith in him, all the blessings and benefits of his redemption.

And, as the Laity are permitted to partake of this sacrifice—the most holy thing—the shew-bread, or bread of the presence of the Christian Church—which, under the law, was not lawful for any to eat but only for the priests; so it is evident, that such portion of Christ's priesthood is given to them, as qualifies them to join in offering the christian sacrifice, and to partake of it with the priests of the church. And, in this sense, I take it, the whole body of christians are called a holy priesthood, a royal priesthood—are said to be made, not only *kings*, to reign with Christ in glory hereafter, but *priests* unto God.*

From this view of the matter, we may see in what sense the consecrated, or eucharistised bread and wine are the body and blood of Christ. They are so sacramentally, or by representation—changed in their qualities, not in their substance. They continue bread and wine in their nature; they become

* It will by no means follow from hence, that private christians have a right, or power, to consecrate the Eucharist: that right, or power, being, by the institution itself, confined to the apostles, and their successors, and those empowered by them—no others being present at the time but the apostles.

come the body and blood of Christ in signification and mystery—bread and wine to our senses; the body and blood of Christ to our understanding and faith—bread and wine in themselves; the life-giving body and blood of Christ in power and virtue; that is, by the appointment of Christ, and through the operation of the Holy Ghost—and, the faithful receive in them the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice and death to all spiritual intents and purposes.

There is, therefore, in this holy institution, no ground for the errors of transubstantiation, consubstantiation, or the bodily presence of Christ, with which the Church of Rome, Luther, and Calvin, have deceived, beguiled, and perplexed the church. The bread and wine are, in their nature, still bread and wine—They are not transubstantiated into the natural body and blood of Christ, as the Papists teach—The natural body and blood of Christ are not consubstantiated with them, so as to make one substance, as the Lutherans teach—Nor are the natural body and blood of Christ infused into them, nor hovering over them, so as to be confusedly received with them, as Calvin and his followers seem to teach; for they are far from being intelligible on the subject. The natural body and blood of Christ are in heaven, in glory and exaltation—We receive them not in the communion in any sense. The bread and wine are his body and blood, sacramentally and by representation. And, as it is an established maxim, that all who, under the law, did eat of a sacrifice with those qualifications which the sacrifice required, were partakers of its benefits; so all who, under the gospel, eat of the christian sacrifice of bread and wine, with those qualifications which the holy solemnity requires, are made partakers of all the benefits and blessings of that sacrifice of his natural body and blood, which Christ
Jesus

Jesus made, when, under the symbols of bread and wine, he offered them to God, a propitiation for the sin of the world.

I am not sensible that, in this explanation of the mystery of the Eucharist, I have departed from the letter, or sense, or spirit of the Holy Scripture: and, in support of it, I appeal to the early writers, and first liturgies of the Christian Church.* It cannot be supposed, that those early writers were ignorant of the doctrines and practice of the church in their own time; or that they would wilfully misrepresent them. Nor could they be ignorant of the doctrines and practice of the apostles: at least, they had better and surer means of information than we can have, especially if we disregard their testimony. For, they had the same Gospels and Apostolical Writings that we have: they understood the language in which they were written, and the manners and customs of the age, better than we do: and, the tradition of Apostolical practice passed but few hands, before it came to them.

The first liturgies may be supposed to have been corrupted by the interpolation of some of the errors of subsequent times. Should this be granted, it will not follow that no credit is due to them. It will not be difficult, by comparing them together,†

* I might also appeal to the testimony and authority of the first Reformers in England; to the first Prayer-book of King Edward the sixth; to a great number of eminent Divines of the Church of England; and to the present doctrine and practice of the venerable remains of the old Apostolical Church of Scotland, which, by God's merciful goodness, and to the glory of the Redeemer, has preserved this Holy Institution pure and ungraded.

† This has been done by Dr. Brett, accompanied with a learned dissertation on the subject. And also in an anonymous publication, entitled, *The ancient Liturgy of the Church of Jerusalem, being the Liturgy of St. James, freed from all latter additions, &c.* London, printed by James Bettenham, 1744.

to detect those interpolations and errors: and of this we may be sure, that those principles in which they all agree (differing only in expression) must be the remains of Apostolical Antiquity.

By attending to these, we shall not only see the order and process of the consecration of the holy elements, but also the principles on which their practice was founded—

At the time of the celebration, the officiating Bishop, or Priest, first gave thanks to God for all his mercies, especially for those of creation and redemption. Then, to shew the authority by which he acts, and his obedience to the command of Christ, he recites the institution of the Holy Sacrament which he is celebrating, as the Holy Evangelists have recorded it. In doing this, he takes the bread into his hands and breaks it, to represent the dead body of Christ, torn and pierced on the cross; the cup, also, of wine and water mixed, representing the blood and water which flowed from the dead body of Christ, when wounded by the soldier's spear. Over the bread and the cup he repeats Christ's powerful words, *THIS IS MY BODY—THIS IS MY BLOOD*. The elements being thus made authoritative representations, or symbols of Christ's crucified body and blood, are in a proper capacity to be offered to God as the great and acceptable sacrifice of the Christian Church. Accordingly, the oblation, which is the highest, most solemn, and proper act of christian worship, is then immediately made. Continuing his prayer, the Priest intercedes with the Almighty Father, to send upon them (the bread and wine) the Holy Spirit, to sanctify and bless them, and make the *bread* the *body*, and the *cup* the *blood* of Christ—his spiritual life-giving body and blood in power and virtue; that, to all the faithful, they may be effectual to all spiritual purposes.

purposes. Nor does he cease his prayer and oblation, till he has interceded for the whole Catholic Church, and all the members of it—Concluding all in the name and through the merit of Jesus Christ the Saviour.

The Eucharist being, as its name imports, a sacrifice of thanksgiving, the bread and wine, after they have been offered or given to God, and blessed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit, are returned by the hand of his Minister to be eaten by the faithful, as a *Feast upon the Sacrifice*—the Priest first partaking of them himself, and then distributing them to the Communicants; to denote their being at peace and in favour with God, being thus fed at his table, and eating of his food; and also to convey to the worthy receivers all the benefits and blessings of Christ's natural body and blood, which were offered and slain for their redemption.

For this reason, the Eucharist is also called the Communion of the body and blood of Christ; not only because, by communicating together, we declare our mutual love and good will, and our unity in the Church and faith of Christ; but also, because, in that holy ordinance, we communicate with God through Christ the Mediator, by first offering, or giving to him the sacred symbols of the body and blood of his dear Son, and then receiving them again, blessed and sanctified by his Holy Spirit, to feast upon at his table, for the refreshment of our souls; for the increase of our faith and hope; for the pardon of our sins; for the renewing of our minds in holiness, by the operation of the Holy Ghost; and for a principle of immortality to our bodies, as well as to our souls.

From this consideration, the necessity of frequently communicating in the Holy Eucharist evidently appears. It is the highest act of christian worship;
a direct

a direct acknowledgment of God's sovereignty and dominion over us, and over all his creatures. It is the memorial of the passion and death of our dear Redeemer, made before the Almighty Father, to render him propitious to us, by pleading with him the meritorious sufferings of his beloved Son, when he made his soul an offering for sin. It is a sensible pledge of God's love to us, who, as he hath given his Son to die for us, so hath he given his precious body and blood, in the Holy Eucharist, to be our spiritual food and sustenance: And as the bread of this world, frequently taken, is necessary to keep the body in health and vigour; so is this bread of God, frequently received, necessary to preserve the soul in spiritual health, and keep the divine life of faith and holiness from becoming extinct in us.

It may be expected, I should say something of the qualifications which make us worthy Communicants. But this is a point so particularly treated in most of the books upon this subject, that I shall content myself with mentioning the principal of them.

1. The first qualification is Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, administered by a person duly authorised by commission from Christ to act in the name of God. For the Church being the mystical body of Christ, we can have no right to communicate with him the head of that body, till we are duly made members of it. And as admission into Christ's Church is entering into covenant with God, no person can make that covenant on God's part, but he who is commissioned to transact in God's name.

2. Confirmation by a Bishop of the Catholic Church. Because that principle of spiritual life is thereby implanted in us, which the Holy Eucharist is intended to nourish and bring to maturity.

3. That

3. That all those who are come to sufficient age have a competent knowledge of the sacred mystery. This knowledge is called by St. Paul—the *discerning of the Lord's body*; and means, more particularly, the distinguishing this sacrifice from common food, as being the body and blood of Christ in power and effect. And this knowledge will shew itself in our receiving the holy mysteries with suitable devotion and reverence; with lively faith, and thankfulness to God, and with sincere love to mankind.

4. That we have kept our Baptism undefiled, or have cleansed ourselves by sincere repentance. In many things we sin daily through the unavoidable weakness of nature; but, by the merciful terms of the Gospel, sins of infirmity defile not our Baptism; that is, they do not break and disannul our baptismal covenant. God is graciously pleased to pass them over for Christ's sake, and will not bring them into judgment against us, provided we do not willingly live in them, but are sorry for them, and watch, and strive, and pray earnestly and constantly against them. But gross, wilful, and habitual sins are of a different nature. They put us out of God's favour, and disqualify us for the Holy Eucharist, till, by true and real repentance, we have humbled ourselves under them, and brought ourselves to a hatred and detestation of them; lest, by eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ unworthily, we become hardened in iniquity, and bring the judgments of God upon us in this world, and fall under his condemnation in the world to come.

DISCOURSE VII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF THE SABBATH.

GEN. ii. 2, 3. *And on the seventh day God ended his work, which he had made: And he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made.*

IT needs no deep research into human nature to convince a reasonable man, that we are made capable of religion; and, consequently, that we are intended to be *religious creatures*. But this intention cannot be answered, unless some part of our time be employed on religious subjects, and in religious offices. Were men left to themselves to determine how often, and at what time, they would perform their religious duties, it is probable, that by the generality, they would not be performed at all. That there should be some stated times for religious assemblies, is therefore reasonable, because otherwise there could be no social worship: And, it is equally reasonable, that there should be some law to oblige men to observe those stated times, and to improve them properly; because the appointment of the time, without a law to enforce its observance,

VOL. I. B b would

would answer no purpose—it would in effect be no appointment.

That he who made man should best know what is proper for him, can admit of no doubt: Nor can it be doubted that he has authority to bind him to the observance of such institutions, as he shall please to enjoin him. That he has determined how often, and has fixed the time when we shall perform the duty of public worship, is evident from the text, “God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.”

That the sanctification of persons, places, and things, means their being set apart for holy purposes, and to be employed in the service of God the Creator, may be easily proved from scripture. The Priests under the law, and the Apostles under the gospel, were taken from among men, and *sanctified*, that is, *set apart*, to minister for men in things pertaining to God. This was also the case of all the successors of the first Priests under the law, and is the case of all the successors of the Apostles under the gospel, from the time of their appointment to this day. Particular animals, selected from others, and set apart, to be employed in sacrifice to God, were thereby *sanctified*: And this, probably, was the origin of the distinction between clean and unclean beasts, which took place even before the flood. Places and things are sanctified by being separated from common uses, that they may be employed only in the worship and service of God. By parity of reason, the blessing and sanctifying of the seventh day means its being set apart, or separated from common uses, and secular business, and devoted to the purposes of Religion; that is, to the worship and service of God the Creator.

It is true, some learned and pious men have supposed that the text was spoken by way of anticipation; and that the observation of the Sabbath was
not

not actually in force, till two thousand years after; namely, upon the exit of the Israelites out of Egypt. But the words of the text are so precise, and so determinately express the time and reason of the institution.—God finished the work of creation in six days, and on the seventh rested from his work, that is, ceased to produce any more creatures—that I do not see, how that sense of them can be admitted, without doing great violence to the sacred books.

We read, indeed, nothing more of the Sabbath, till the coming up of the Israelites out of Egypt; but it will not follow that no Sabbath was observed by good people. We have but one instance of sacrifice being offered before the flood; * yet, we can hardly suppose, bad as the world was, that the worship of God was neglected by every individual, during that whole period.

That the memory of the creation should be preserved, was absolutely necessary, if it was necessary to preserve the knowledge and worship of the Creator: And, to do this, nothing seems so proper as some public monument or memorial of that event. A local monument or memorial would not have answered the purpose; for when the world came to be peopled, the greater part of men would have been out of the reach of its influence. But, to set apart every seventh day for this express reason, because on the seventh day God ceased from the works of creation; and to require all men, on that day, to cease from their worldly labour and business; and to employ themselves in celebrating the worship of the Creator, in contemplating his works, and imploring his protection, seems, of all others, the most effectual means to preserve the knowledge of the Creator, and the memory of the creation in the world. It is a monument that would go with the human

* Gen. iv. 3, &c.

human race into all countries, and would equally affect the whole world. To suppose that this was not done, but that God only gave intimation of his design to establish such an institution at some future period, is to suppose that God did not take the most proper care to perpetuate the memory of the creation, and the knowledge and worship of himself, the Creator, in the world; but left points of such vast importance to the bare chance of oral tradition.

The Creation of the World was an event of as much importance to mankind, as the deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt was to them, and deserved, at least, an equal commemoration. We ought, therefore, to understand Moses as declaring a plain matter of fact, when he says, "On the seventh day God ended his work which he had made, and rested from all his work which he had made—that God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made."

From the text it appears that the Sabbath is an institution which concerns all mankind. All men are the creatures of God, and therefore obliged to acknowledge and worship the Creator. Of course, christians are included in the obligation, as much as any other people: for the appointment being *universal*, none can be exempt from it: the reason of it will hold to the end of the world; so long, therefore, the obligation to regard the appointment will continue. The only question that can arise, with regard to christians, is concerning the day. Are they obliged to observe the *seventh day* from the creation? I answer, They know not which it is, nor can they know it. The spirit of the command seems to be, that a seventh part of our time be appropriated to God our Creator, who made all things in

fix

fix days, and on the seventh ceased from his work of creation; and, therefore, set apart the seventh day to holy purposes; that is, after six days spent in worldly business, we are to cease from it on the seventh, and appropriate that day to the purposes of religion—to the worship of our Creator. More than this cannot well be supposed to be implied in the *seventh day*: for it does not appear that the seventh day, as a part of time, would be the same in all parts of the world, because the beginning of every day, and of course, of the seventh, must be eighteen hours later in some parts of the world, than in Eden or Palestine, or wherever we suppose the Sabbath to have begun; that is, the Sabbath would of necessity begin eighteen hours later in some places than it did in Eden. As, therefore, the original institution of the Sabbath respects all mankind, and the Sabbath cannot begin in all parts of the world at the same point of time, it must follow that the original intention was, that, after six days spent in worldly business, the seventh should be a day of rest, and devoted to the worship of the Creator, in token that HE, who made the world, was their God.

It will not follow from hence, that all men jointly, or any part of them, have a right to determine which day of the seven shall be the Sabbath. The appointment being by divine authority, the precise day, as well as the portion of time, must depend on the same authority; that is, as God appointed one day in seven to be set apart for holy purposes, so that day must be observed which he appointed, and no other.

At the first institution there could be no difficulty about the day. God having employed six days in the creation, ceased to produce any more creatures; the seventh day he blessed and sanctified. That seventh day was the first Sabbath, and every subsequent

quent seventh day would be a Sabbath-day, until God should please to change it for some other.

That the day was changed by the express direction of God, upon the *exit* of the Israelites out of Egypt, though it may not admit of demonstrative proof, is highly probable. In the fourteenth chapter of Exodus, we have the history of the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea, and of the pursuit and destruction of the Egyptians. There it is said, "Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians."* Some of the best Expositors suppose that this day, on which God saved Israel by the destruction of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea, was afterwards appointed for their Sabbath.† The opinion is grounded on the following circumstances:—

In Deuteronomy, where the Decalogue is repeated, on occasion of the Israelites entering into covenant with God, in the land of Moab, the Creation is not mentioned as the reason why they should keep their Sabbath; but their servitude in Egypt, and their deliverance from it—"Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty hand, and by a stretched out arm: therefore, the Lord thy God commanded thee to keep the Sabbath-day;"‡ that is, to keep that day for their Sabbath, on which they were fully delivered from the bondage of Egypt—the day on which the Lord saved Israel out of the hand of the Egyptians—otherwise, there seems no congruity in making their servitude in Egypt, and their deliverance from it, a reason for their keeping the Sabbath.

* Verse 30.

† Particularly the celebrated Mr. Joseph Mede, in his Sermon on Ezek. xx. 20. and Bishop Patrick, in his Commentary.

‡ Deut. v. 15.

It is, indeed, possible that the seventh day, in order from the creation, may have been the day on which the Israelites experienced that great deliverance at the Red Sea; and so both reasons for keeping the Sabbath, the creation, and their deliverance from Egypt, may have coincided; but, there are some circumstances which make this improbable.

In the sixteenth of Exodus, we have an account of the miracle of the Manna, with which God supplied the Israelites, during their sojourning in the wilderness. On the fifteenth day of the second month after they came out of Egypt, they marched from Elim to Sin.* Having expended the dough or meal which they brought with them, their hunger and fatigue made them impatient. They repined at having left the plenty of Egypt, and murmured against Moses and Aaron, accusing them with a design to famish and kill them in the wilderness. God promised Moses "to rain bread from heaven for them;" and directed that they should gather a certain quantity every day—as much as would serve them for that day, and no more—that he might *prove them*, whether they would trust in his power for their daily bread; but that on the sixth day they should gather and prepare a double quantity—enough to last them two days; because, as it afterwards appears, the next day was to be their Sabbath, on which no manna would fall. As the manna was not to fall till the next morning, that evening God sent them quails for a present supply of food; afterwards, they were to depend on the manna only, for we read not that the quails were continued.

* They come out of Egypt the fifteenth of the first month; the fifteenth of the second month was, therefore, one complete month after they left Egypt.

continued. The next morning,* the manna appeared, and the people gathered a certain quantity, and continued to do so for five days. On the sixth day† they gathered a double quantity. The overseers of the people, supposing it would putrify, as it had done when some inconsiderate persons had attempted to keep it to the second day, came and told Moses, who replied, "This is that which the Lord hath said, To-morrow is the rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord—ye shall not find it in the field."‡

Now, if the twenty-second was a Sabbath, in ordinary course, the fifteenth would have been a Sabbath also; but on the fifteenth they had marched from Elim to Sin; the fifteenth, therefore, was no Sabbath; and therefore the Sabbath-day was at this time changed; and why it should be changed, no good reason can be assigned, but the one before alledged from Deuteronomy, namely, that it was done in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt, which was completed by their passage through the Sea, and the destruction of the Egyptians.

Besides, had the twenty-second day of the month been a Sabbath in course, no good reason can be assigned why "the Rulers of the congregation" should come and tell Moses that the people, on the twenty-first, were gathering a double quantity; for God had told Moses § "that on the sixth day" (supposing that to mean the sixth day of the week, as the week then was) "they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily"—a circumstance of which we cannot suppose Moses neglected to inform them, as it was necessary to regulate their conduct, so as to make

* The morning of the sixteenth day of the month.

† Viz. on the twenty-first. ‡ Vers. 23, 24, 25, 26. § Vers. 5.

make it comport with the will and command of God.

This transaction was previous to the giving of the Law, and proves that the Israelites did observe a Sabbath before the Law was given; but that they had kept it in the time of their slavery in Egypt, while they were under the controul of severe task-masters, I presume not to say.

At the giving of the Law on mount Sinai, the Sabbath is expressly and strictly enjoined; and the reason assigned for its observance is such as concerns all mankind; "For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath-day, and hallowed it."*

The reason here assigned for the sanctification of the Sabbath, refers to the original institution—to God's creating the world in six days, and resting on the seventh—For this reason, God then blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it—set it apart from all common uses, and appropriated it to the purposes of divine worship, and religious contemplation.

The reason assigned in Deuteronomy for their observation of the Sabbath is, that they had been servants in Egypt, and that God had brought them out by his irresistible power; and, therefore, commanded them to keep the day of their deliverance holy to the Lord, as a day of rest and religious worship.

The Israelites, therefore, were commanded to keep the Sabbath on two accounts. As they were men, they were to sanctify one day in seven; that is, after six working days, the seventh day was set apart for the worship of God, in commemoration of God's having ended his works of creation in six days, and resting—ceasing to create—on the seventh.

VOL. I.

C c

As

* Exod. xx. 11.

As they were Israelites, they were commanded to keep that precise day in which they had been brought out of Egypt, in commemoration of their deliverance from bondage. In both senses was the Sabbath a sign or token to them; and, through them, to the rest of the world. By keeping one day in seven, they were taught, and did proclaim to the world, that they worshipped the Almighty Creator of heaven and earth, who had made all things in six days. By keeping the day of their deliverance from Egypt for their Sabbath, they were instructed, and did declare to others, that this Almighty Creator, who had made the world, was that very God who had delivered their nation from bondage in Egypt, by opening a passage for them through the Red Sea, and by overwhelming in it Pharaoh and his army, who pursued them.

From the first of these reasons it appears, that the Sabbath is a moral command, enjoining the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, the Creator of the universe; and must, therefore, be of perpetual and universal obligation. If it ever were a duty to acknowledge and worship the Creator, it is so still, and will be so for ever. If it were a duty in the Israelites to worship the Creator, it must be the duty of all men, for all men are the creatures of the same God.

There is nothing more said in the books of Moses respecting the institution of the Sabbath, except on account of appointing the Sabbatical Year, and ordering the work of the Tabernacle.* And the reason why the institution is repeated, on these occasions, seems to be, to convince the Israelites, that neither the Sabbatical Year, nor work immediately done in the service of God, could disannul the obligation of the weekly Sabbath. For, the Sabbatical

* Exod. xxiii. 12. and xxxi. 14, 15, 16, 17.

tical Year and the Tabernacle were merely Judaical institutions, and consequently temporary; whereas the obligation of the weekly Sabbath was universal and perpetual.

From what has been said it appears, that the appointment of every seventh day, to be observed as a day of holy rest to the Lord, was intended to commemorate the creation of the world in six days, and to recognize the Creator as our God, and the only object of adoration to all creatures. This reason looks back to the beginning, and forward to the end of the world. In six days God created the world and all that is in it: on the seventh day he ceased to create. He, therefore, blessed the seventh day and sanctified it; that is, he set it apart from common affairs, to be employed in religious and holy duties. Six days he gave to man, to be spent in the ordinary labours and duties of life; but every seventh day he reserved to himself, to be spent in his worship; to keep up the knowledge of the creation, and of himself the Creator, in the world. This reason is given by God at the creation, and is repeated, in the most awful and august manner, to the Israelites at mount Sinai. It is a reason which affects all mankind—they are all the creatures of God—all inhabit the world which he made—and are, therefore, all obliged to own, and acknowledge, and worship him their Creator.

Thus the matter stood, till the coming of Christ. Let us then see whether Christianity has made any alteration in it.

Now, it does not appear that the observation of the Sabbath was abrogated either by Christ or his Apostles.

The original institution, therefore, remains in full force, and one day in seven is still to be kept holy to the Lord. But it does appear that the day was

was changed, either by Christ, or his Apostles acting by his commission, and under the direction of the Holy Ghost; and either authority is a sufficient warrant for us.

It has been observed, that, in all probability, the original day of the Sabbath was changed to the day on which the Israelites came out of Egypt, in commemoration of their deliverance. This change of the day affected only the Israelites: the rest of the world were not concerned in it. If, now, it shall appear that the day was again changed from the last day of the week, or Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, to the first day of the week, or Sunday; then it will appear that the Jewish Sabbath is abrogated and done away, and the Christian Sabbath or Sunday is come in its room. Before we proceed, I beg it may be recollected,

That the original appointment was of every seventh day to be kept holy to God, to recognize him as the Creator of the world—That this is a moral command of perpetual obligation—That the appropriation of the Sabbath to the last day of the week, in commemoration of the deliverance of the Israelites from their bondage in Egypt is a ritual command, and respected the Jews only; and, of course ceased with their œconomy—That the appropriating of the day to the first day of the week, in commemoration of Christ's Resurrection on that day from the dead, is *Christian*, and to continue as long as Christianity shall continue; that is, to the end of the world.

As, therefore, the Jews kept their Sabbath on two accounts—to recognize God as the Creator of the world, and as their deliverer from Egypt, by conducting them through the Red Sea; so Christians keep Sunday on two accounts; to recognize God as the Creator of the universe, and in commemoration

ration of their deliverance from the slavery of sin, and the power of death, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, their Lord, from the dead on that day. And if God thought proper to appoint *Saturday* for the Jews' Sabbath, in commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt on that day—an event which immediately concerned them only; can it be strange that God should appoint *Sunday* for the Christian Sabbath, to commemorate the Resurrection of Christ the Lord on that day—an event which concerned all mankind?

Let it be also recollected, that every thing in the Jewish law, all their rites, ceremonies, sacrifices, and solemn days, and indeed all the great things God did for them, were typical of something under the Gospel: They were shadows of good things to come, and were to have an actual and real completion in the spiritual kingdom of Messiah. The Sabbath, in its original institution, respected Adam and all his posterity; and is yet in full force, unrepealed. It requires every seventh day for religious purposes. This, too, is the purport of the fourth commandment. But the command that the Israelites should keep *Saturday* for their Sabbath was peculiar to them, and one of the types of their law, intended to commemorate their safe passage through the sea, when their pursuers were destroyed.

St. Paul hath told us, that all the Israelites were baptised unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. We know that Moses was a type of Christ, and that baptism is a figure of Christ's death, by which we are buried with him into death. The going of the Israelites into the sea was a type of Christian Baptism, and a figure of the death of Christ; and their coming up safe out of the sea was a type of Christ's Resurrection, and a figure of our resurrection through him. The day, therefore, which they kept

kept as their Sabbath, in commemoration of their deliverance at the Red Sea, must have been a type or figure of that Sabbath, or day of holy rest, which is now observed under the Gospel, in commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ the Messiah from the dead.

Let us now see whether this opinion, that the day is, under the Gospel, changed from the last to the first day of the week, has any sufficient ground in holy scripture to support it.

From the Acts of the Apostles, and from some of the Evangelists, we have undoubted evidence, that the Apostles and first Christians did usually meet on the first day of the week for public worship, particularly for the *breaking of bread*; that is, for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. I ask, how they came to do so? Did they take this step of their own head, without any warrant from God? It would be presumptuous to say so. Either they had the command of Christ to justify their conduct, or they acted under the influence of the Holy Ghost. That they had the command of Christ to observe the first day of the week, or Sunday, as a day of holy rest from worldly business, and for the offices of religion, the following considerations will render more than probable—

That after our Lord's Resurrection, he appeared to his Apostles, twice at least, on the first day of the week, when they were assembled for divine worship, and by doing so, gave full sanction to their conduct—

That he continued with them forty days, “speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God,”* that is, instructing them in the nature of his kingdom, and directing them how to discharge the

* Acts i. 3.

the weighty commission he was about to give them, according to his will—

That the Apostles were all Jews, and as much attached to their Sabbath as other Jews were, and cannot be suspected of entering into a combination to change the day of their religious assemblies, without the particular direction of their master. But however this may be,

The Apostles had from Christ the promise of the Holy Ghost, to be with them, to “guide them into all truth,”* to “teach them all things, and to bring all things to their remembrance whatsoever he had said unto them.”† They, therefore, were not left to their own discretion—to follow their own judgments and imaginations. For, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost came on them, according to Christ’s gracious promise: And, that his presence with them was not transitory, but permanent, appears from the miracles they daily wrought, and the supernatural gifts they constantly possessed. Thus commissioned by Christ, and directed by the Holy Ghost, they had an unquestionable power to settle and fix the rites and times of Christian worship.

That they did appropriate the *First Day* of the week, or *Sunday*, for the Christian Sabbath, or day of holy rest to the Lord; and did, on that day, hold their religious assemblies for public Christian worship, appears from their own practice,‡ and also from the concurrent testimony of the Church, in all parts of the world, and in all times, from its first establishment to this day.§

It

* John xvi. 13. † John xiv. 26. ‡ Acts xx. 7. 1 Cor. xvi. 2.

§ A small sect of Anabaptists have arisen in modern times, who adhere to the observation of the Jewish Sabbath or Saturday, in opposition to the Christian Sunday. But why they choose to commemorate the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt, and refuse to commemorate their own deliverance from

It being ascertained that God did, at the creation of the world, institute a weekly Sabbath, or day of holy rest, to keep up the knowledge of that glorious display of the power and wisdom of the Creator, and to retain mankind in the worship of him, and in obedience to his will—that he renewed the command at mount Sinai, annexing the same reason for its observance, namely, that he completed his works of creation in six days, and rested on the seventh—and that the Apostles of our Lord did, either by the direction of their master, or the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, observe and institute in the Christian Church a weekly day of holy rest and public worship—it remains to be considered, how that day is to be kept by Christians.

Under this head, I shall say nothing of the Jewish Sabbath, as it was a commemoration of their deliverance from Egypt, because it was peculiar to them, and ceased with their law. But in the first institution at the creation, and in the repetition of it at Sinai, there are several things, either directly expressed, or fairly implied, which deserve our serious notice. In both, a day of holy rest is commanded, in commemoration of God's having made the world in six days, and ceasing from his work on the seventh. The reason concerns all mankind, and extends to all periods of time. God blessed and sanctified the seventh day, and thereby set it apart for holy purposes. We have, therefore, no right to spend it in worldly business or recreations. It is God's day and not ours—He reserved it to himself and

the power of the grave, by rejecting the observation of Sunday in memory of Christ's Resurrection, they must assign a reason if they can. The Quakers too, from a zeal to be freed from all ordinances except of their own making, disregard Sunday as holy time, thereby abrogating the original institution of God, which stands as much unrepealed as any command he ever gave to mankind.

and never gave it to us. It is a day of rest for all; and, therefore, servants ought, as much as possible, to rest on it, as well as masters and mistresses. Nay, the rest extends even to beasts; they, therefore, ought not to be put to any unnecessary labour on that day.

In the fourth commandment, the prohibition is express—"In it thou shalt do no manner of work, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle." To say that this command respects only the Jews is a mistake. The reason of the command, "in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day," concerns all mankind equally with them; and full as much as do the other commandments. To make it obligatory on Christians, there was no need that Christ should expressly confirm it, because it did already bind all men. It was enough that he did not expressly repeal it. It is true he limited and abated the rigour of the law—"thou shalt do no manner of work," by excepting works of necessity, humanity, and mercy from its prohibition; but this exception confirms the law in all things not excepted.

The nature of the law and design of the institution must ascertain and determine these exceptions. Christ hath said, "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;"* that is, the Sabbath was instituted for the benefit, and not for the destruction of men: and therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath-day—to attend to all the works of humanity and mercy; especially when the opportunity would be lost, or detriment arise from delay. Still, however, the command, "in it thou shalt do no manner of work," remains in full force, and

VOL. I.

D d

moft

most certainly forbids all pursuit of worldly business, trades, professions, and diversions.

But, though Sunday is ordained to be a day of rest from worldly business, it is not intended to be a day of idleness. Let us then inquire what the proper business of the day is; and, that we may do so to better effect, I beg it may be recollected, that, from the beginning of the world, the Sabbath was sanctified to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, the Creator of the world—that to the Jews, after their deliverance from Egypt, it was sanctified to the worship of the true God, not only as the Creator of the world, but also as their deliverer from Egypt, and their law-giver. On the first account, they kept one day in seven: on the latter account, the last day of the week, or Saturday—the day on which they passed the Red Sea, and were thereby fully delivered from the bondage of Egypt. To us Christians, also, a day is sanctified to the acknowledgment and worship of the true God, the Creator of the world, and of Jesus Christ our Redeemer and Law-giver. On the former account, we keep holy every seventh day: on the latter, we observe Sunday, or the first day of the week, for the particular day; because, on that day Christ rose from the dead, and thereby delivered us from the bondage of sin and death. Keeping these things in mind, and at the same time adverting to the typical Sabbath under the law, and considering it as the figure of the day of rest to Christians under the dispensation of the gospel, it will not be difficult to ascertain how Christians ought to employ Sunday.

The Jews were obliged to attend the public worship, to celebrate the rites of their religion, and to improve themselves in divine knowledge, by hearing the law read and expounded, as they had opportunity.

portunity. By parity of reason, Christians are obliged to attend the public assemblies for divine worship, at such hours as the Church has appointed; to join in the prayers and praises of God; to hear his holy word read and explained, as they shall have opportunity; and to celebrate the rites and mysteries of their holy religion.

If we consider the object, for whose worship this day is appointed, it cannot fail to impress the duty most forcibly on us—It is our Creator—he who made us and all the world—who gives us all the good things we enjoy, and who continually guards and preserves us by his providence. It is our Redeemer, who, at the price of his own blood, ransomed us from death and misery, and who hath procured the gift of the Holy Spirit for us in this world, and eternal life in the world to come.

“The Sabbath was made for man”—for his benefit. For his benefit, too, was public worship ordained. All the advantages, that spring from them, centre in him. Exposed to the numberless evils of this life, we constantly need the protection of God; who alone has power to preserve us. In ourselves we are unable to supply our own necessities, and must depend on his goodness for all that we enjoy. We live by his food—we breathe his air—we tread his earth. Is it not, then, reasonable that we should jointly implore his protection, which we all need; and acknowledge his goodness, of which we all partake; and praise him for his benefits, which we all enjoy? Through weakness of nature, or perversity of heart, we daily offend the purity and holiness of our gracious and good God, by our vices and sins. Should we not, then, unitedly confess ourselves to him; and, with penitent hearts, join our supplications for mercy and forgiveness?

To

To make atonement for our sins, Christ gave himself up to the infirmities and distresses of this world, even to death itself on the cross. Ought we not, then, to acknowledge, and celebrate, and shew forth the dutiful sense we entertain of the greatness of his love to us, by paying him that worship and adoration which are due to his divine nature; and which gratitude for his unmerited benefits demands of us? Ought we not to do so particularly by commemorating him in that holy institution, by which he hath promised to seal to us all the blessings of his passion and death? One great duty of Sunday is, therefore, to attend, with due reverence and devotion, on the public worship of God our Creator and Redeemer, in his holy Church: And, whoever considers his obligation to do so, both from gratitude and the positive institution of God, will let no trifling excuse keep him either from the morning or the evening Service of the Church. Decent regard to the authority of the Church, which has provided both morning and evening prayers, was there no other reason, would require this mark of respect from him.

It remains to be considered, How the remainder of Sunday is to be spent? I answer, that as the day is appointed for rest from worldly business, and to keep up the knowledge and memory of the creation, and of our redemption, it ought to be appropriated, as far as the necessities and infirmities of nature will permit, to religious purposes—it ought to be spent in the contemplation of the wonders of creation, providence, and grace: in examining into the state of our hearts and tenor of our lives; that by comparing them with the rule of our duty, the law of God, we may see wherein we have transgressed, and be thereby excited to repentance, and greater carefulness for the time to come: in acquiring,

acquiring, either by reading, or conversation with serious persons, information in divine knowledge: in instructing our children and servants in the principles of our holy religion, and of their duty both to God and man. Some part of Sunday thus employed, would be perfectly agreeable to the original design of the day. It is necessary that all these religious duties be performed, at some time or other; and, if no set time be appointed for doing them, they will probably be neglected. The business and occupations of the world, with most people, take up the whole week—their necessities require it, and God has given it to them. It remains, then, that Sunday is the proper time for attending to these duties; not that opportunities on other days are to be neglected; but because they, who are straitened for time by the necessary cares of life, have this day exempt from worldly distraction, on which to regard their own spiritual concerns, and the religious instruction of their families.

That God has annexed many promises of favour and blessing to those who sanctify his Sabbaths, and reverence his worship, no Christian can be ignorant; and that he has threatened those who profane and neglect them, with his displeasure. These promises and threatnings are, indeed, in the Old Testament; and, on that account, we may think the less of them. But, we should remember, that the institution of the Sabbath is as old as the creation; and, therefore, cannot be a peculiarity of the Jewish law, any more than the other nine commandments are so; and that when St. Paul said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning," he spake expressly of the scriptures of the Old Testament. God, indeed, may not now openly bestow temporal blessings on those who regard his ordinances, nor inflict visible judgments on those
who

who neglect them; yet no one can tell how far the secret, but sure movements of his providence affect even their worldly interests. But, with regard to our future state, we know that he hath appointed a day, when he will render to every man according as his life has been—when our disregard of his commandments and ordinances, with all our secret sins and open transgressions, shall be brought into judgment, before his impartial and tremendous tribunal.

Even with regard to this world, the happiness of civil society, in a great measure, depends on the due observation of Sunday, and on the public worship of God. Fraud, and theft, and violence, destroy not only that mutual confidence which is necessary to the business, and intercourse of men in society; but also that security, without which they cannot live in safety. Human laws may check these enormities, but they never can entirely prevent them. They restrain only the outward actions, whereas the remedy that cures them must go deeper and mend the heart. This can be effectually done only by religion—by the firm belief that God sees and regards the thoughts and designs of the heart, and will bring them into judgment, as well as the outward actions; and will deal with us, in a future world, according as they have been agreeable or repugnant to his laws.

That the principles of religion should pervade and govern all orders of men is, therefore, necessary to human happiness. Many helps may be given her in this business, but the most effectual is the one provided by the wisdom of God—the due observation of Sunday, in the manner which the offices of the Church, and the reason of the institution require.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE VIII.

OF CHRISTIAN UNITY.

EPHES. VI. 3, 4, 5, 6. *Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling: One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

THE necessity of Christian Unity is so frequently and strongly enjoined on us by our blessed Saviour and his holy Apostles, that it is a matter of surprise to see the generality of Christians so very inattentive to it. If they ever think of it, it is, probably, under some idea in which they have been educated, or which they have caught from others, without ever comparing their sentiments with the rule of God's word, the only true standard by which to try them.

The force of prejudice imbibed in youth, and matured by education and habit, commonly holds a man in bondage all his life, at least is not likely to be overcome by those careless Christians who take their religion upon trust, and are of some particular party, because their fathers and grand-fathers were so before them. They, too, who choose their religion from interest, passion, or resentment; indeed,

deed, on any other consideration, but the single one of doing the will of God—are in danger of making shipwreck of Christian Unity, as well as of faith and a good conscience.

It is not uncommon to hear people talk of the necessity of union with Christ; of getting an interest in him; and having once persuaded themselves that this union and interest are obtained, they are perfectly at their ease: no thought of any obligation to unity with Christ's Church ever occurs to them. They can divide and separate at their pleasure; join sometimes one party of Christians, and sometimes another. The exercise of Christian liberty is their right; and it consists in the privilege of uniting with any religious denomination which shall please them; of continuing with them as long as their good liking continues; and, when that shall cease, of leaving them and joining any other they shall happen to like better, if such an one can be found; if not, they can set up for themselves, and form a Church upon their own principles.

Whether such vague principles will bear to be examined by sober reason and the word of God, is a matter which deserves our consideration. Upon Christian principles, no one can be united to Christ, but through the medium of Christ's Church; and his Church is but *one*; called in the text *one body*.

On the oneness, or unity of Christ's Church, stands the necessity of Christian Unity. Could there be more churches of Christ than one, the obligation and necessity of Christian Unity would be at an end; and we might be of either of them, and still be united to Christ. And, was it possible that all the discordant sects and denominations of Christians, differing in their government, doctrine, sacraments, were all parts of the one Church of Christ; we might be of either of them, if not with the same advantage,

advantage, yet at least with a safe conscience. Let us then attend to the nature of Christ's Church according to the text; and we shall, I trust, be convinced that it can be only *one*.

1. Christ, the head of the Church, is but one; and, therefore, the Church which is his body can be but one. It is against nature for the same head to have more than one body; and, it is equally against nature, for the body belonging to that head to be divided into distinct and contending portions. For though the same body may have different members, it cannot have separate parts, because whatever is separated from the body ceases to be a part of it. As therefore Christ is one—"one Lord;" so the Church, which is his body, can be only one.

2. The same consequence will follow from that "one faith" in the "one Lord" to which all Christians are called, and which they must all hold, that they may become living members of that "one body." This faith, though it consists of various articles, can be but one, because it stands on one ground, the truth, or word of God; and centers in one object. Therefore it is, that the Apostles speak of a "unity of the faith," as well as "of the knowledge of the Son of God"*—of a "faith once delivered to the saints, for which they must earnestly contend"†—of "the faith of the gospel," for which they must strive together, "in one spirit with one mind‡—of a like, that is, of the same precious faith"§—of "the common faith,"|| which all Christians are supposed to hold. These expressions shew evidently that this faith is but one, and that whoever wants it cannot be in the unity of Christ's Church.

VOL. I.

E e

3. The

* Eph. iv. 13.

† Jude iii.

‡ Philip i. 27.

§ 2 Peter i. 1.

|| Th. i. 4.

3. The same conclusion will follow from that "one Baptism," by which we are admitted into the Church of Christ and made members of his "one body;" and, for the due reception of which, the "one faith" is an indispensable requisite. We know of but one way of admitting men into the Church, and making them members of the "one body" of Christ, by uniting them to him the one head of that body, and that is by the "*One Baptism of water and of the Spirit*" which he himself hath appointed for that purpose.* This Baptism being but one, the body of Christ, to which it unites us, can be but one.

4. Another reason why the Church is, and can be, but one, is, that there is but "one God and Father of all," who, by his essence, "is above all," being the origin and fountain of the Divinity, and of every thing which exists; by the energy of his nature is "through all," pervading and governing every thing which he has made; and, by the operation of his Spirit, is "in you all," who are members of the Church of his beloved Son; for,

5. That there is but "one body" of Christ, (the Holy Catholic Church) appears from the "one Spirit," the life-giving Spirit of God, which animates that "one body." Of this Spirit every member partakes, by virtue of his union with that "one body" which is animated by this "one Spirit." As all the members of the natural body are animated by that spirit which animates the whole body, in consequence of their being members of the body, and united to it; so it is with the members of the Church: The gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit which they receive, come to them in consequence of their relation to Christ, and union with him.

The

* Matt. xxviii. 19. John iii. 5.

The Spirit, therefore, which animates the Church, being the Spirit of God, and but one; the Church, animated by it, must also be one.

6. The text furnishes another reason why the Church of Christ is but one; namely, the “one hope of our calling”—the hope of eternal life through Jesus Christ. As this hope is but one, and common to all good Christians; so the Church which furnishes this hope, can be but one.

As, therefore, there is one Father, the fountain of the Deity; one Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, who is “over all God blessed forever”—the head of the Church which he hath redeemed and purchased with his blood; one Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father, by whom “the whole body of the Church is governed and sanctified;” one faith in this Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to the profession, and acknowledgement of which, all Christians are called; one Baptism by which we profess this faith, are admitted into Christ’s Church, and made partakers of that Spirit in whom our union with Christ subsists; one hope of our heavenly calling—the hope of seeing God in glory; so the Church distinguished by these blessings and characters, depending on this *one* Father, governed by this *one* head, sanctified by this *one* Spirit, cemented by this *one* faith, washed by this *one* baptism, supported by this *one* hope, can be only One.

On this ground, as I said before, stands the Unity of the Church; and from it arises the duty of every member to continue in it, and to serve God faithfully in the station to which his providence has called him, using devoutly all the means of grace and holy living, which his goodness has provided for him.

The Church, therefore, is not the institution of man, but of God—not a confused company, but
a regular

a regular society founded by divine authority. It is Christ's Church, because he purchased and redeemed it with his blood. He called it out of the world, and separated it from the world, that it might be holy unto himself; and the school of holiness to all who, being admitted into it, would conform to its holy and divine nature. For this purpose, HE appointed its government; HE instituted its priesthood; HE ordained its sacraments; HE bestowed on it his Holy Spirit; HE is the author of its faith; and HE gave to it the promise of eternal life. Its design is to take men out from under the sin, folly, and vanity of this wicked world, to unite them to Christ, and to one another, by a new birth from the Holy Spirit of God; and to train them up, in holiness and obedience, for the heavenly kingdom of their Creator, in whose "presence is the fulness of joy, and at whose right hand there is pleasure for evermore."*

This being the nature and design of the Church of Christ, it must be a visible institution, and not hard to be distinguished; otherwise, it would fail of obtaining the end proposed by it. It is to be known by its government, doctrine, and sacraments; where these are, as Christ ordained them, there is the Church of Christ; where these, or any of them are wanting, there the Church is not; at least, not in a sound and perfect state. What the government, faith, and sacraments are, which were appointed by Christ, the Scriptures of the New Testament inform us. But, that the Scriptures may have their proper and full effect, it is necessary that the reader be free from prejudice, and disposed to receive and obey the will of Christ; that is, to believe what he hath said, and to do what he hath commanded. Where difficulties arise, the practice of the Apostles, and of Apostolic

Apostolic men in the next age after them, together with the customs of the first Churches, will be the best comment to guide our inquiries.

Another property of Christ's Church in this world is, that it is Catholic or Universal; that is, it is not limited to any period of time, but is to continue to the end of the world; nor confined to one nation, as the Jewish Church was, but admits for its members people of all countries and nations, as well as of all ranks, and degrees, and sexes, and ages. The world is its scene: But, as members from the whole world cannot meet in one place, for the purpose of worship and communion, the Church must necessarily be divided into different portions, each portion being a member of the one Church of Christ. Locally considered, these portions may be denominated particular Churches, and take their names from the city where the Bishop resides; as the Church of Jerusalem, of Antioch, of Alexandria, &c. The union of a number of these Churches, under a Metropolitan or Archbishop, is denominated from the country; as the Church of Egypt, of Syria, of France, of England, &c.

In the mode of their worship, in the particulars of their discipline, in their rites and ceremonies, they may differ; but, so long as they retain the government, faith, and sacraments instituted by Christ, they are parts or members of his Church; and their Bishops have the right, not only of communion, but of being considered as true and valid Bishops of Christ's Church, wherever they shall go.

These local Churches, each under its own Bishop, must again be divided into congregations, each under its proper Presbyter, all subject to the Bishop of the diocese. The people of the several congregations keep up their unity with the Church, by submitting to its discipline, by communion with their Presbyter,

ter, and by their right of communion with every branch of the Catholic Church, wherever God's providence may cast them: the Clergy preserve the same unity, by their submission to their Bishop, by their communion with him, and with each other. In this way, was the unity of the primitive Church preserved; its government, faith, and sacraments maintained in their integrity; and its discipline duly administered. The people preserved communion with their Presbyter; the Presbyters with their Bishop; the Bishops with each other, in government, doctrine, sacraments, and councils. So that all orders and degrees of Christians may, in this way, enjoy all the means of grace and holy living, which the all gracious Head of the Church hath appointed for them; and each member of the same, in his vocation and ministry, may truly and acceptably serve God; and, "holding the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life," may finally obtain the hope of his calling, eternal life with God in heaven.

This view of the subject necessarily supposes an union of Christians with each other, and with Christ the head of the Church. The Church is the body of Christ; every Christian is a member of that body, and of course is united to every other member, and to Christ the head. This union is effected and kept up by the operation of the Holy Spirit, who was given to the Church, in consequence of Christ's ascension into heaven—"By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body"—"and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."* This Spirit being from Christ, and Christ being the head of the Church; it is evident, that every Christian receives the Spirit of Christ, by his being a member of his Church. Hence appear the guilt and danger of departing
from

* 1 Cor. xii. 13.

from the unity of the Church. By so doing, we separate ourselves from the body of which Christ is the head, and whose animating principle is the Holy Spirit of God. For if we receive the Spirit, in consequence of our being members of Christ's Church; to preserve his presence with us, we must preserve our union with the Church, through which we first received his heavenly influence.

The means by which we are made members of Christ, it has been observed, is Christian Baptism; the requisite qualifications for which are *faith* and *penitence*—a belief of the mercy of God, and of the redemption of Christ; the forsaking of sin, and an earnest desire of being delivered from its power over us.

This faith and repentance spring from the influence of the Holy Spirit, which was imparted to human nature, when God said to Adam—"the seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."* By which word, a principle, or seed of salvation—a capacity of goodness was given to it, making man again capable of the inspirations of the Holy Spirit, which, by the fall, were departed from him. By Baptism we receive the Holy Spirit, not only as a seed or capacity of goodness; but in a more eminent degree, as the principle of holiness, the life of our life, to bring to perfect maturity that seed of salvation, which has been sown in our hearts by the goodness of God.

To preserve the presence and influences of the Spirit received in Baptism, we must preserve that faith and penitence which were necessary for his reception in that sacrament—a firm belief in the mercy of God, and an earnest desire that he would deliver us from all the miseries of our present sinful state—a firm belief also in Jesus the Redeemer, that

* Gen. iii. 15.

that he has made a full atonement for our sins, and that God has accepted that atonement, and will be merciful to our sins through him—and, in consequence of this faith, an utter renouncing of all sin, and a ready disposition to do every thing which God requires us to do. For, the Spirit of God is the spirit of holiness. All his influences tend to increase and perfect that principle or capacity of goodness, which was given to man immediately after his fall.

If, then, we receive the Holy Ghost, in virtue of our being made members of Christ's Church, it will follow, that if we renounce his Church, we renounce that Spirit which we received by coming into his Church; and, consequently, we renounce all that God can do for us; for all that God can do for us, must be done by and through his Spirit.

Hence appears the absurdity of the right so generally claimed by Christian professors, of forming their own Church, or of joining any party of people whom they shall please to call a Church. Christ has but *one* Church; and if we be not in his Church, we are out of it; and, let our Religion be ever so right and good in our estimation, it can have no warranted title to those privileges and blessings, which are, by divine authority, annexed to the Church of Christ.

God may look with pity on the misapprehensions of honest mistaken people; and we trust, and hope, and believe, he will not bring the errors of the head into judgment against them, where the heart is uncorrupt: Still, Christ has but one Church, and all the contrivances of man cannot make another.

If we appoint a government of our own invention; or have mistaken the government described in the New Testament; our calling it the government of Christ's Church will not make it so. If

we

we set up a ministry by our own authority, and call our ministers Christ's ministers, it will confer no power from him upon them; and the sacraments they shall administer can be only our sacraments, and not Christ's. Should they preach, and what they preach be true, they have no commission from Christ, and preach not by his appointment. If we wish to receive the full benefit of the government, ministry, sacraments, and faith, which Christ hath appointed for us, we must have them according to his institution, or we have no right to apply to ourselves the gracious promises he hath made to his Church—that is, we must have them according to his own commission and authority exercised in his Church.

The short of the matter is this; In the Church of Christ, we have the government, faith, sacraments, worship, and ministry or priesthood which are by divine authority: In the use of them, we can assuredly depend on the blessings which God hath annexed to them. To this Church the Holy Spirit is given: As members of it, we receive his heavenly graces and influences, to conduct us to the hope of our calling—eternal life through Jesus the Redeemer. Out of the Church, we are sure of none of these things (because, out of the Church, God hath not promised them;) but we are of *the world*—emphatically, of *this wicked world*, in which we live; which is in opposition to the Church of God; the “friendship of which is enmity with God.”* Therefore, St. Paul writing to the Ephesians says, that before they were converted and brought into the Church, they were “aliens, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.”†

VOL. I.

F f

In

* James iv. 4.

† Eph. ii. 12.

In this Church there may be hypocritical and corrupt members, even as there may be diseased and vitiated members in the natural body; therefore our Saviour compared his Church to a net cast into the sea, which gathers good and bad fishes—to a field in which tares grow with the wheat.* When the net is drawn to the shore, the fishes that are wholesome for food are reserved, and the bad ones thrown away; and when the harvest is gathered, the tares are separated from the wheat, and burned; so at the great harvest of the general judgment, the wicked shall be separated from the children of God in his Church, and condemned with the evil world.

Most reasonable, therefore, is the direction the Apostle hath given, in the beginning of the text, “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The unity of the Spirit can only be kept by keeping the unity of the Church, which is the body animated by it. The disposition to do so will shew itself by continuing in the Church, if, by God’s grace, it is our happy lot to be already in it; or by coming into it with all sincerity of heart, if it be our misfortune hitherto to have kept ourselves out of it—submitting quietly and peaceably to its government—abiding in sacraments and worship with its ministers—stedfastly holding the common faith once delivered to the saints—living in holiness and piety towards God, and in love and charity with all its members—and exercising good will and affection to all mankind.

The great bar to this conduct is a proud spirit—a high opinion of our own dignity, ability, knowledge; and more especially of our spiritual attainments. Such a person is above submission to any thing, but his own opinion; and that he claims the privilege of changing, as often as he pleases. For this

* Matt. xiii. 25, &c. 47.

this reason, the Author of the text recommends to the Ephesians, in the verse before it, “lowliness and meekness; with long suffering,” and “forbearing one another in love;”* because it is from the want of these amiable qualities, and from that only, that the *one* Holy Catholic Church of Christ hath been so miserably rent and torn, as we see it is at this day: infomuch, that Christian unity is little thought of, as if no mention had been ever made of it in the Bible. Most ardently, most affectionately did the blessed Redeemer, just before he was betrayed, even at that very supper when he offered himself to the Almighty Father a willing victim for the sin of the world, pray for his Apostles, and all those who should believe in him through their word, “*That they all might be one.*”† thereby fully justifying the holy author of the text, in using his name, in exhorting the Corinthian converts to Christian unity—“I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.”‡

Remember, therefore, that as there “is one body,” the Holy Catholic Church of Christ; “and one Spirit” which animates that body, even the Holy Spirit of God; “one hope of your calling,” the hope of eternal life with God; “one Lord,” Jesus Christ the head of the Church; “one faith,” on which it is founded; “one baptism,” by which we are admitted into it; “one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all;” so Christians, “being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”§

They

* John xvii. 21.

† John xvii. 21.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 10.

§ Rom. xii. 5.

They must, therefore, in all lowliness and meekness, endeavour to keep "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," that they may attain the end of their calling, eternal life; through Jesus Christ. Amen.

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE IX.

THE DESCENT OF CHRIST INTO HELL.

ACTS ii. 25, 26, 27. *For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved. Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad: moreover also, my flesh shall rest in hope. Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thy holy One to see corruption.*

THESE words are a quotation from the 16th Psalm, written by David, but on what particular occasion is not known. Whatever may have been the occasion, David could not have spoken personally of himself, but only prophetically in the character of Messiah; of whom he was an eminent type, and to whom alone the words are really applicable. That, in applying them to the resurrection of Christ, we do not misinterpret them, we have St. Peter's authority, in the Text. After quoting the whole passage, he argues from it, in the following manner—"David could not speak here in his own person; for, of him personally the words are not true. He died and was buried, and his sepulchre yet remaineth with us. But, as a prophet, he knew that God had declared with an oath, that Messiah, according to his human nature, should spring from him. He therefore speaks of the resurrection of Christ, that
his

his soul should not be left in hell, nor his flesh see corruption:" Then, from the resurrection of Jesus, he proves that he was Messiah. St. Paul* makes the same application of the passage; and reasons from it, in the same manner with St. Peter.

That Messiah should die for the sins of men, was part of the covenant of grace. But divine goodness had farther views of mercy for them—not only to deliver them from the punishment of sin, but to open to them the gate of everlasting life. It was, therefore, necessary they should be rescued from the grave of death, as well as freed from the penalty of sin.

Another part of the covenant made with Messiah was, that when he made his life an offering for sin, his soul should not remain in the state of the dead, like the souls of other men, till corruption seized on his body; but, that he should rise without seeing corruption, to immortality and glory. This promise God declared by the mouth of holy David, when he said, in the character of Messiah, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thy holy one to see corruption." And this promise he fulfilled, when he raised up Jesus from the dead, on the third day: his human soul being brought again from *adēs*, or hell, the hidden, or secret place of departed spirits; and re-united to his body, before putrefaction had begun in it. He gave up the ghost, after three o'clock, on Friday afternoon; and rose again, at farthest, by the dawning of the day on Sunday; so that thirty eight hours is the longest period that could have intervened, between his death and resurrection.

Literally did God make good the promise which had gone out of his mouth. The soul of Messiah was not left in hell, nor did his body see any corruption.

* Acts xiii. 35.

ruption. His resurrection opened to him the "path of life;" and, at his ascension, he was led to that "presence," where "is fulness of joy; and seated on the right hand of God," to be made glad with his countenance, and to enjoy forever the glory and triumph of redeeming love.

I have understood the word *Hell*, as signifying a secret, invisible place, corresponding with the meaning of the Greek word *aidnē*. In this sense, our Saxon Ancestors used the word. The modern English generally understand it in a bad sense, to signify the place of *extreme torment*, to which the incorrigibly wicked shall be doomed by the just judgment of God. Yet, in some parts of England, particularly in the West, the expression *to hell* is not unfrequently used; and signifies *to cover*. And the workman who covers the roof of a house, instead of a *thatcher*, *tiler*, or *slater*, is called a *bellier*; that is, a *coverer*.

Hell, therefore, does not necessarily mean the place of the *damned*; but also the place of *departed souls*, good and bad. For, that it was the belief of the primitive Christians, as well as of the old Jews, that at the departure of the soul from the body, it went to a secret, invisible place provided by God for its residence, there to remain till the general judgment; the wicked in uneasiness, remorse, and despair; the good in peace, and refreshment, with an assured hope of God's favour, and a full acquittal at the final retribution; that this was the belief of Jews and Christians, might be fully proved from Jewish authors, and from the old Liturgies, and writings of the Fathers, did the compass of this Discourse permit it. On this ground stood the commemoration of the martyrs, and prayers for the faithful departed out of this life, that God would grant them rest and peace in Christ, and free acquittal in the day of judgment: and to give us grace to follow the example

ample of their faith and patience, that with them we might be made partakers of his heavenly kingdom, through the merit of Jesus the Saviour. This they supposed necessary on their part, to keep up the communion of saints, or fellowship with the Church of Christ; which is still one and the same, whether suffering here on earth, or at rest in Paradise, and waiting in hope for perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul; when the judgment of the last day shall give them their portion in that life eternal, which God hath promised to all who obey the Gospel of his Son.

Every one who will consider the subject without prejudice, must feel the force of such a principle in promoting the faith and holiness which the Gospel requires; and will lament that the Church of Rome, by grafting the absurd errors of *purgatory*, and prayers to departed Saints, instead of *for* them, on this old, and pious, and catholic, Christian doctrine, hath almost banished it out of the minds of Protestant Christians.

Let us now see what proof of this intermediate state between death and judgment, can be brought from the Holy Scriptures.

In them I can find no intimation of any judgment after death, but only of the general judgment at the last day: nor any promise of perfect bliss and happiness to the good, nor threatening of full misery to the wicked, but in consequence of that judgment. There must, therefore, be some place of residence provided for the souls both of the good and wicked, either in happiness or misery, according to their different states and capacities, between death and judgment. For, that the souls of good men are alive and active, between death and the resurrection, appears from what our Saviour said of the souls of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob,—“they *live* unto God.”*

Christ

* Luke xx. 38.

Christ promised the penitent thief, that he should be with him in Paradise, the day on which he died.* If, by *Paradise*, we understand *heaven*, the scene of perfect bliss and glory, it will follow that Christ ascended thither twice; once, with the penitent thief, the day on which he died; and once, after his resurrection.

St. Peter saith, "David is not ascended into the heavens."† Of his body he had spoken, when he said, "he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us, unto this day." His soul, therefore, must have been in some place distinct from the grave, which held his body; and from the heavens, whither, he saith, he is not ascended.

St. Paul, speaking of the old Saints, saith, "These all having obtained a good report through faith, *received not the promise*: God having provided‡ some better thing for us; that they without us should not be made perfect."§ There is, therefore, some promise which these saints have not yet received, which they cannot receive without us, which is necessary to make them perfect, and to the receiving of which their death is no impediment. What promise can this be, but the promise of *perfect* bliss, at the *last day*? At present, therefore, they are not in heaven; but, in a state of rest and refreshment, and of assured hope of following their glorified Redeemer in triumph to his kingdom in heaven, in company with all the faithful servants of God, after the judgment of the last day.

Besides, all the saints here mentioned died before the incarnation of Christ. But, it seems incongruous, with both reason and scripture, that they should enter into the heaven of perfect bliss and glory, before their Redeemer had entered and opened for them

VOL. I.

G g

the

* Luke xxiii. 43.

† Acts ii. 34.

‡ *προβλεψάμενοι*—foreseen.

§ Heb. xi. 39, 40.

the gate of everlasting life. Therefore, they remain in Paradise, as happy as they can be till the re-union of soul and body, at the resurrection of the just.*

To this Paradise; this hidden, invisible receptacle of the souls of the faithful servants of God, after their departure from the body, we profess our belief that the soul of Christ, when he gave up the ghost on the cross, did go, when we say, in the Apostle's Creed, *He descended into Hell*—not into a place of punishment, but into a place of refreshment, appointed for the residence of the souls of the just, between death and the resurrection—That, as his body was dead and buried, so his soul went into that state in which the souls of holy men are reserved, till his resurrection.

This appears to have been the Catholic doctrine of the Primitive Church: and, if the opinion, that the descent of Christ into *adns, hell*, was one of the last articles introduced into this Creed; it was probably done in opposition to those Heretics, who denied that Christ had a *human soul*, but supposed that his body was actuated by the *Divinity*. This opinion amounts to a denial of his perfect humanity; and, of consequence, to a denial of his being a perfect Redeemer of man. The Apostle gives it as a reason why the redemption of Christ extended not to the Angels, because he took not on him their nature: but that he “took on him the seed of Abraham,”

* Instead of adding any thing further in support of this point, I take the liberty to recommend to the inquisitive reader a little book printed in London, 1713, for S. Keble, at the Turk's head, and R. Gosling, at the Mitre and Crown, against St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet-street, intitled, *Some primitive Doctrines restored: Or the intermediate, or middle State of Departed Souls (as to Happiness or Misery) before the Day of Judgment, plainly proved from the Holy Scriptures and concurrent Testimony of the Fathers of the Church: To which is prefixed, the Judgment of the Rev. Dr. George Hickes, concerning this book, and the subject thereof.*

ham,"* and was "in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might make reconciliation for the sins of his people."† It was necessary, therefore, that he should be perfect man, in order to make perfect our reconciliation with God—that he should have a human soul, as well as a human body—that he should die and be buried like other men; and that his soul should go to the place of departed spirits, as the souls of other good men do.

The other two Creeds expressly declare the human nature of Christ. The Nicene Creed saith, that he "was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." The Creed of St. Athanasius asserts, that he is "perfect God and perfect man; of a reasonable soul, and human flesh subsisting." That faith, which the Holy Catholic Church hath taken such pains to declare and establish, ought not to be looked on with indifference by any good Christian. On the contrary, it will be his comfort and glory to believe and profess the perfect humanity of the Redeemer—that as he has redeemed our bodies from the grave, by being buried and rising again; so he has redeemed the souls of all the departed servants of God from *aidēs*, by going thither in his human soul, and being again brought from thence by his Divinity, and re-united to his own body, making it possible for all his faithful servants to rise, through him, to life and immortality, as he did. For, by this faith we are assured that neither the grave nor hell could prevail over him, to keep him in bondage.

It appears from the history of his resurrection,‡ that "many bodies of the saints which slept, arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many."

The

* Heb. ii. 16, &c. † *ἐν ὅλῳ ἡμῶν*, *He laid hold of.*

‡ Matt. xxvii. 52, 53.

The souls of these saints were brought by him from *adn*, and re-united to their bodies, to grace the triumph of his resurrection, and to give evident proof, that both hell and the grave were subject unto him; that he had actually overcome death, and him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil; and that he was able to make good his promise, and raise up to eternal life, at the last day, all those who believed in him. It was also an assurance to all the holy souls who were at rest in *adn*, that they should not be forever left there; but, in God's good time, should obtain a happy resurrection, and have their "perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in his eternal and everlasting glory," through the power and merit of the great Redeemer.

Should we carry this idea further, and suppose that Christ, between his death and resurrection, went to that prison of departed spirits which the Hebrews denominated *Tophet*; the Greeks, *Gebenna*; the Latins, *Tartarus*; and, which the English call *Hell* in its bad sense, where the souls of the wicked are confined in anguish and despair, against the judgment of the last day—should we suppose that he went thither, not to suffer, but to pass in triumph through the kingdom, or residence of the great adversary and destroyer of men; I see no absurdity, or ill consequence that could follow from it. It would have demonstrated to all orders and degrees of intelligent creatures, that all things, even the powers and principalities of darkness, were indeed subject to him—that neither death, the grave, nor hell was exempt from his dominion. That St. Paul referred to such a transaction, when he said that Christ "spoiled principalities and powers," and "made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in his cross,"* I will not affirm. *Ἐξ ἀρχῆς* signifies *with authority*,

* Coloss. ii. 15.

city, as well as *openly*; and *ἐν αὐτῷ* may as well be rendered *in himself*, as *in it*, viz. *the cross*; and is so rendered in the margin of our Bibles: that is, "Having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of " them with authority, triumphing over them in himself."

In this world, the devils were subject to him. With his word he cast them out of those whom they had possessed. And, if they found that the soul of that man to whose command they had been subject, conducted by his divine power, passed through their residence, as their master and conqueror even in death; no wonder they dreaded his authority, and fled before him from their temples and oracles, making it evident to all discerning men, that he dealt with them with the same absolute power, which conquerors exercise over their captives.

This consideration cannot fail to impress his faithful servants with the most lively faith and trust in his almighty power. For if he, as their Redeemer, passed victoriously through the residence of their great adversary, eminently called the *Evil One*; they may be confident, he is able to conduct them through all difficulties and dangers, however heightened and rendered distressing by the prince of darkness; and to bring them in safety to his own heavenly kingdom.

DISCOURSE X.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CREATION OF ADAM.

GEN. ii. 7. *And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*

MOSES having ascertained the being, power, and goodness of God, by his history of the creation, proceeds to inform us of the production and nature of man, the principal inhabitant of this world; and of the relation he bears to other beings both above and below him. He had told us, that the various animals were produced by the command of God; the waters and the earth respectively bringing forth those living creatures which were proper to them. God spake, and it was done: He commanded, and they were made. From their origin, and from our own observation, they appear to belong merely to this world, and to be here capable of their full enjoyment and happiness.

As these animals are evidently below man, in their nature and faculties; so we learn from revelation, that there are beings of an order superior to him, whom we call Angels. Of their creation, Moses says nothing; his history being confined to the creation of this world, of man its inhabitant, and to the dealings of God with him. But, to the being and agency of the Angels he bears ample testimony,
in

in his writings. The other books of Holy Scripture represent them as being of different orders, under different heads or princes, who stand in the presence of God, ready to execute his commands. They are, also, described as making the retinue of the Divine Majesty; so that wherever the Angels are, God is said to be more immediately present.

We are further informed, that some of them, probably one whole Order, fell from the state of their creation, by sinning against their Maker; and became filled with envy and malice. St. Paul hath pointed out *pride* as their crime.* Being lifted up by the powers of their nature, and the exalted station which they held, they forgot their dependence on him who made them, and arrogantly attempted to be the contrivers of their own happiness, and to live by their own will.

Between these two orders of beings, (the brute animals of this world, and the hosts of happy Angels), there is, manifestly, an immense distance. The one is earthly and bestial, the other spiritual and heavenly: the one confined to the earth in its nature and enjoyments; the other, inhabitants of heaven, and blessed with the presence of God: the faculties of the one are of the lowest degree, consisting of sensitive powers, and of the influence of instinct; those of the other are at least rational in the highest degree, if not happy in the most perfect intuition which can belong to any creature.

It is observable, that all the works of God are in a regular chain of connection, rising from inanimate matter, through various degrees, up to the highest intelligence. A Being, such as man was, at his creation, seems to have been wanting to fill up the chasm between the brute animals of this world, and the angelic orders. Such, evidently, God made him,

* 1 Tim. iii. 6,

him, allied to the animals of the world in his body; to the Angels, in his soul. If we look to his body, he is a perfect animal, partaking with other animals of sensations and perceptions obtained by his bodily senses, and having nearly the same instincts and propensities with them. But, if we look to his soul, even now in his fallen, degenerate state, we shall find him like the Angels, in the faculties of reason, understanding, and freedom of will—in the powers of imagination, and in the sensibility of the difference between moral good and evil. What, then, must he have been in that perfection of nature in which he was originally created? From the history which Moses, by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, hath given us of his creation, we only can have ground to form a judgment of the intention of God in his formation. Let us, therefore, attend to him.

When he had finished the history of the creation of the heavens and the earth; of the sun, and moon, and stars; of vegetables and animals; and all things were ready for the introduction of the principal inhabitant, he gives an account of a divine consultation respecting his creation, nothing of which had happened in the creation of the animals. The earth and the waters brought them forth, by the command of God. But, with regard to man, God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness."

The unity of God is acknowledged by all who believe divine Revelation, or follow the dictates of reason. There can be but *one* almighty, independent, and perfect Being. What, then, gave occasion to this form of speech, "Let us make man?" which is not confined to this one place; other instances occur in the scriptures—"Man is become as one of us"—"Let us go down"—"Who will

VOL. I. H h go

* Gen. i. 26. † iii. 22. ‡ xi. 7.

go for us? — To say, with the Jews, that God addressed himself to his Angels; or, with the Socinians, that he spake after the manner of earthly princes, is absurd: there was then no earthly prince existing; nor have we any account that the Angels were ever concerned in the works of creation. For a solution of this difficulty, we must therefore recur to that plurality of co-eternal, and co-equal Persons in the Divine Essence, of which revelation informs us.

So much of the mystery of the adorable Trinity, as was necessary for a solid foundation to our faith and hope in Jesus Christ as the Redeemer of the world, God hath been pleased to make known to us in the New Testament, perhaps as fully as our faculties are capable of conceiving it. And, it ought to be a source of comfort and joy to us, to find the same divine mystery intimated, though in obscurer terms, to the servants of God, from the beginning. Man was made to bear the image of his Creator; and consequently to exhibit, as in a glass, the mystery of the adorable Trinity.

The faith of the Christian Church, that there is one God in three Persons is, therefore, the original faith, and the foundation of all true religion. On it is grounded the whole mystery of our Redemption, and the entire possibility of our salvation. Without this distinction in the Godhead, there would have been no Son of God to redeem us, no Holy Ghost to sanctify and renew us. Holding fast this faith, let us, with grateful hearts, acknowledge the goodness of God in revealing it from the beginning of the world, and in preserving the knowledge of it in his Holy Church, to be the ground of our hope and confidence in him.

It being determined in the divine council, that man should be made in the image of God, God first made his body “of the dust of the ground.”

I. The

* Isa. vi. 8.

1. The first observation, which I have to make, relates to the distinction there is between the human body and the bodies of the other animals: The elements brought them into being at the command of God; but the body of man was the immediate work of God himself. HE did not command the earth to bring him forth; but HE "formed" him "of the dust of the ground," according to the determination of his own wisdom and goodness.

This should teach us the dignity and excellency of the human body above the bodies of the brute animals, and should lead us to esteem and reverence it accordingly. It is the immediate work of God, and not to be defiled and debased by the indulgence of enjoyments which make no distinction between the man and the brute. In his present state, man has appetites and propensities common to him and brute animals—they are necessary to his subsistence. But the knowledge of the higher dignity of his own body ought to prevent his placing his happiness in the gratification of them; and to make him cautious lest, by indulging them to excess, he degrade himself to the level of the beasts that perish.

2. Man, being made of the dust of the ground, has his body from this world. It must, of course, partake of the nature of the elements; be subject to their changes; and be disordered by them, as well as receive impressions from them. It cannot, therefore, from its own nature, be here in a fixed, immutable condition. Revelation informs us, that most of the changes and decays to which the things of this world are liable, and actually do suffer, were brought on them by the fall of man, from the state of his creation, into sin and rebellion against his Maker. But that they were originally made liable to change and decay, appears from their actually having been changed.

The

The body of man, taken from the elements, must have been liable to change and decay with them—it could have no higher, or more durable nature, than the materials out of which it was formed.

Another reason which shews that Adam was not created incapable of decay is, “the Tree of Life” which God caused to grow in the midst of the garden of Eden, and of which he was directed to eat. Whether this tree had a natural quality to repair the decays of the human body, and preserve it in life and vigour, as some have supposed; or, whether it were sacramental, and intended to keep up in Adam a constant and lively sense of his dependence on his Creator, by giving him an assurance and pledge of life and immortality, while he preserved his dependence and obedience entire, as others have thought; it comes to the same thing. It was to him the appointed means of immortality. His body, therefore, was not immortal by nature; that is, it was not created in such a state, as to continue free from decay and dissolution by its own energy given to it by God, at its creation. For why should the means of immortality be provided for him, unless those means were necessary to continue him in life? Immortality, therefore, belonged not to him by nature—it was the gift of God; and his continuance in life depended on his obedience, and use of the means of life which God had appointed for him.

3. It is to be observed, that Adam was not created in the garden of Eden, but was removed into it after his creation. There grew the Tree of Life, which was to be the support of his immortality. There, too, grew the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which was the test of his obedience. His residence in the garden was, therefore, in some degree, supernatural, and adds weight to the opinion that

that when he had given sufficient proof of his obedience, and had confirmed his life by the use of the appointed tree, according to the good pleasure of God, he would have been removed from the garden to heaven, there to have enjoyed the presence of God, in life immortal and full of glory.

4. The consideration, that our bodies are taken from the earth, should teach us humility, and abate that vanity which places the perfection of our nature in beauty of person; and the chief happiness of life in adorning the body with rich and gay apparel, to attract the eye and admiration of beholders. Admire the beauty and symmetry of person, as we will; adorn it as we please; its origin is from the earth; it is subject to all the vicissitudes of earthly things, to various accidents, to pining sickness, and loathsome disease; any of which may convert our beauty into deformity, and render ridiculous every attempt at ornament and finery.

5. When God had formed Adam's body of the dust of the ground, he "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul."

By the taking of his body from the ground, he became allied to the world, and partook of its earthly nature; and by his soul's being breathed into him by God, he became allied to him, and partook of his spiritual nature. The soul, therefore, cannot be a material substance. God is not matter; neither can the human soul which came from him be matter. Refine matter as we please, it will still be *matter*, and as distinct from *spirit* as ever.

6. It is remarkable, that though our Translation reads, "the breath of *life*" in the singular number, the Hebrew word is plural, "the breath of *lives*;" and seems to imply that more than one life or soul, if I may so express myself, was breathed into Adam by God at his creation. What now appears in human

man nature, in its present debilitated state, seems to strengthen such an opinion. That there is in man an *animal* soul or life, such as the brutes have, and by which they perceive; which is the foundation of their instincts and propensities, and which directs them in all their operations, must appear to every careful observer: and probably it would operate as uniformly, and as extensively in man, as it does in the other animals, was it not interrupted and restrained by a superior principle, his *rational* soul. From the mixed influence of these two principles, man becomes a rational animal, and fills the middle state between the animals of this world, who have only a sensitive, instinctive soul, and the order of Angels, who are endued with perfect intellect, or pure reason.

We have authority to say, that God made all things by his *Word*, or *Λόγος*. "Without him was not any thing made that was made."* The Word or Son of God was, therefore, the maker of man, as well as of the other creatures. From him man received his rational soul and all the powers of his understanding. In this sense, is he "the true light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world;"† being the author of that reason and understanding which is in every man, and which makes him capable of distinguishing between good and evil, of understanding the will of God, and of the inspirations of his Spirit.

7. Hence it appears, that the old philosophy of the Heathens, which taught that the body is no essential part of the man, but an adventitious covering of the soul, by which it is incumbered, and prevented from exerting its faculties with that energy and vigour which it will acquire in its unbodied state, is not founded in fact. The body is an essential,

* John i. 3.

† John i. 9.

essential, though the inferior part of the man. Neither the Soul by itself, nor the Body by itself, is the *Man*, or human person; but the body and soul united. When God had formed the body, and had breathed into it the breath of life, *man*, consisting of body and spirit, became a living soul, a rational animal.

On this ground it was, that the old servants of God, before the Law of Moses, under that Law, and under the Gospel, paid such veneration to the human body, not only during its life, but after its death—bestowing on it decent and religious interment, and, when their circumstances would permit, that which was costly and sumptuous—preserving their burying-grounds from violence, defilements, and indecencies, knowing that the body by its original creation is an essential part of the man, and, equally with the soul, redeemed from death to the possibility and hope of a glorious and blessed immortality.

Part. Of the Creation of Man. 229
 that, though the inferior part of the man. Nei-
 ther the soul by itself, nor the body by itself, is the
 essence of human person; but the body and soul united.
 When God had formed the body, and had breathed
 into it the breath of life, which was consisting of body
 and spirit, became a living soul, a rational animal.
 On this ground it was, that the old servants of
 God, before the law of Moses, under that law,
 as under the Gospel, paid such veneration to the
 human body, not only during its life, but after its
 death—bestowing on it decent and religious treat-
 ment, and, when it is circumstances would permit,
 was which was costly and sumptuous—providing
 that burying-ground from violence, defilement,
 and indignities, knowing that the body by its dis-
 position is an essential part of the man, and
 equally with the soul, rejoined him death to the
 body, and hope of a glorious and blessed immor-
 tality.

DISCOURSE

8.
 be
 in
 be
 im
 nar
 cer
 in
 on
 H
 a
 joy
 to
 his
 we
 let
 T
 th
 th
 we
 da
 of
 ev
 fit

DISCOURSE X.

PART II.

8. **I** COME now to shew, that though it should be granted that the soul of man, the breath of God in him, could not cease to exist; yet that his body being an essential part of him, and not naturally immortal, his immortality must have been a supernatural gift to him from God, to be preserved on a certain condition and by certain means.

It is unreasonable to suppose that God made man in such a state, as that immortality was natural to one part of him, and supernatural to the other. His being formed of the dust of the ground, was a sufficient declaration to him, that earthly enjoyments were all he could claim by nature. And to suppose, that had Adam continued innocent, and his posterity increased only as they have done, they would all have enjoyed immortality, that is, an endless state of blessedness, in this world, is absurd—The world could not have contained them. It must, therefore, have been the purpose of God, when they had passed such a trial as he saw good, and were confirmed in habits of obedience beyond the danger of falling, to have translated them to a state of supernatural bliss in heaven.

Heaven, therefore, was supernatural to Adam, even with respect to his soul. For if he was created fit for heaven, why was he not placed there at first?

why subjected to a hazardous trial, to obtain that happiness for which he was fitted by his creation? But his foundation was in the dust—thence he received his body: and therefore, the immortality of heaven was incongruous to his nature, till his body became so spiritualised, as to be capable of heavenly, and to him, supernatural bliss.

It is also to be remarked, that when Adam fell, the sentence which God pronounced on him adverts immediately to his earthly original—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return"—Thereby reducing him to that state which was natural to him, by depriving him of those supernatural favours which he had forfeited by his disobedience.

It has been said, that Adam was to hold his immortality on a certain condition, and by certain means. The condition was obedience, and that confined to one prohibition, by which the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was interdicted to him. I mean not to insinuate, that it would have been no crime in Adam to have acted contrary to any other command or prohibition of God, or in violation of the distinction which he must, from the seeds of virtue planted in his nature, have perceived between truth and falsehood, good and evil. But Revelation hath informed us of no other crime by which he would have forfeited his state in the garden of Eden, and involved himself and his posterity in such a depth of ruin and misery, as required the interposition, and even incarnation and sufferings of his Creator to repair.

The means by which the body of Adam was to have been preserved from decay, till God saw proper to confer on him the supernatural blessedness of heaven, was his eating of the tree of life, which grew in the midst of the garden.

I see

I see no absurdity in supposing that both the tree of life and the tree of knowledge had natural qualities, the one to preserve, the other to destroy the life of Adam. Or, if we suppose the tree of knowledge to have been naturally free from such baneful effects, and to have been, by God's appointment, the symbol of death to him; yet his eating of it under his circumstances, was a declared determination that he would seek his happiness in his own way, by the gratification of his bodily senses, like the irrational animals, and would not be restrained by the will and commandments of God; and therefore it was an act of wilful and deliberate rebellion against God. If, on the contrary, we suppose the tree of life to have been the sacrament of immortality, and its effect to have been to repair the decays of nature, and keep the body in health and vigour; and also to be the sign and pledge of pardon, and peace with God upon any deviations from duty which might have been incurred through surprise or infirmity, its use must be very apparent.

That the body of Adam must naturally, in his state of innocence, have been subject to decay, has been shewn. It would, therefore, want something to repair it. And that he was liable to deviations from duty, is highly probable. Every created being must be imperfect, and an imperfect being may come short of his duty through mere weakness of nature. "His angels God charged with folly."* There was something in them not so good and right, as it ought to have been—some deviation from strict duty; for nothing else in God's sight is folly. Where, then, is the absurdity of supposing that man, who in his best estate was lower than the Angels, might be subject to such deviations from duty as they were? And how gracious was God to provide

* Job iv. 18.

vide a remedy for him, even the sacrament of the tree of life, by which his covenant with God might be renewed, his faith in him strenghtened, his dependence on him acknowledged, his sense of his goodness confirmed, and his hope in his mercy enlivened?

David hath informed us that God is not extreme to mark iniquities against us:*. Nor could there have been any change in the nature of God, between the time of Adam and David—He is ever the same, and changeth not,

The observation which has been already made gives strength to this opinion; namely, that the sentence of death against Adam was restrained to the single crime of eating the forbidden fruit. Two other commands were given to him in his innocency—one enjoining the observation of the Sabbath, the other declaring the institution of marriage: but neither of them is sanctioned with death; nor have we a right to suppose that death would have followed every breach of them.

It is true, every failure in duty must have been displeasing to God, and would have called for Adam's humiliation and penitence; and would have led him to the tree of life, as the emblem of the Divine mercy, the seal of his pardon, and the means of strengthening him in holiness and dependence on God.

Another means of preserving immortality to Adam was the blessed Spirit of God, bestowed on him as a supernatural gift, to enable him to obtain that supernatural bliss which God designed for him.

This gift of the Holy Spirit is not indeed expressly mentioned by Moses, but is strongly intimated in his account of the creation of man. What less can be intended by his being created in the
“ image

"image of God?" It cannot relate to the form of his body; for God can have no bodily form. The Holy Spirit, though distinct in person, is essential to the Godhead, so that where God is, there the Spirit must be. The image of God, therefore, in Adam, could not be without the Holy Spirit. The dominion over the creatures of the world with which Adam was invested, seems to have been in consequence of the image of God in which he was created; "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea,"* &c.

That Adam was created in holiness, and with power to have persevered in holiness, is allowed by all. But there can be no holiness in any creature but from the Spirit of God. Therefore the Holy Spirit must have been given to him, to be the governing principle of his life: for the means must have been in proportion to the end. If immortality was supernatural to Adam—what he could not obtain by the mere energy of his rational nature; then he must have been endued with power which was supernatural; but such power can only come from the Holy Spirit of God.

If, therefore, when God breathed into Adam the breath of *lives*, he received not only such a soul as made him a living animal, but also such a reasonable, intelligent soul as made him a rational animal; what should hinder but that he received also such virtue and energy of the Holy Spirit of God, as was in him the principle of holiness, immortality, and glory? Without this gift, he seems to have been incapable of obtaining that perfection and happiness for which his Creator designed him.

Should doubts remain on this subject, they will probably be removed by the plainer declarations of the

* Gen. i. 26.

the Christian Revelation, in which the Spirit of God is always acknowledged to be the principle of holiness and immortality: Nay, to him our resurrection from the grave to life eternal is expressly ascribed; "If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you; he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."* Unless man, in his first estate, was to have received a supernatural immortality through the energy of the Holy Spirit, it seems hard to assign any good reason why the operation of the Spirit should be necessary to his resurrection, which is intended to restore to him, through Christ, the immortality which he lost in Adam.

Christianity teaches us that eternal life is the gift of God:† and reason will teach us that it always was, and ever must be so. No creature can be independent of its Creator, nor can hold either life or happiness but as his gift. Consequently, the life of every creature in favour with God, must be by the agency and operation of the Spirit of God. Therefore is our recovery of the Holy Spirit, as a principle of life through Christ, called our regeneration, new birth, new creation; because we regain through Christ, that presence, energy, inspiration, or life of the Holy Spirit, which human nature received when God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of *lives*, and which it lost by Adam's apostasy. Therefore also does the scripture teach us that there is "no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"‡ but only the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: because there can be no immortal life for us but through the operation of that Holy Spirit which we lost by the fall of Adam, and which we can recover in no other way than through the mediation of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,

* Rom. viii. 11.

† vi. 23.

‡ Acts iv. 12.

God, from whom, in unity with the Father, the Holy Spirit proceedeth.

For be it remembered, that the Redemption by Christ, is to regain *that* for human nature, which it lost by the apostasy of Adam. The very words, *redemption* and *restoration*, convey the idea of recovery from the evil state into which we are fallen, and the being replaced in the good state which we had lost. And they will succeed best in ascertaining what we lost in Adam, who best consider what we gain by Christ. If by Christ we are to gain a resurrection from death, we may be sure we lost our title to immortality, and became liable to death by our original apostasy. If we are to obtain the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, as the principle of life, through the mediation of Christ, we may be sure we lost the Holy Spirit as a principle of life, by the disobedience of Adam.—Consequently, by the state of his creation, that Holy Spirit was communicated to man, and was intended to be the governing principle—the life of his life, the soul, if I may so express myself, of his soul: that under his heavenly influence, he might be kept in constant dependence on his Creator, and led through holy obedience, to that immortality in heaven for which he was intended.

The root of many errors in religion, seems to stand in a false notion of what the redemption of Christ is to do for us. Some have imagined that Christ, by fulfilling the divine law in our nature, and in that nature, dying as an atonement for our sins, has obtained a full remission for all the sins which ever were, or will be committed, and has left nothing for us to do; but that his obedience and sufferings shall be so imputed to us, as to make us as holy and innocent as though we never had offended. A man, I trust, may have a true sense of the redemption

redemption and merit of Christ, and yet not be willing to subscribe to this doctrine. The same Holy Scriptures which declare there is salvation in none other than Christ,* declare also, that repentance, and faith, and holiness are necessary to obtain that salvation. Upon the same authority that I believe one of these positions, I must believe them both, for the same scriptures declare them both. Whoever, therefore, lessens the necessity of penitence, or faith, or holiness, by leading people to believe they may be saved without them, is unfriendly to Christianity, and to the souls of men. Christ hath restored us to the hope of immortality, and to the capacity of holiness; both which we are to obtain through the operation of the Holy Spirit which he procured for us. We are called to this hope by the Gospel of Christ, and are made heirs of this immortality by being *elected into his Church*; and we are to make this calling and election sure by living in holiness, according to the precepts of the Gospel.† To do this we are enabled by the Holy Spirit, which all Christians have received as the principle of their life. If they believe and live as the Gospel directs, the supernatural bliss of heaven will be their reward; not on account of any merit in them or in any thing they can do, but through the merit and mediation of Jesus Christ, who hath put this immortal life within their reach, and enabled them to obtain it.

But as Adam, though immortality was before him, and within his power, fell from this hope, and forfeited this prospect of heavenly happiness by sinning against God; so may we also fall from our hope, and forfeit our prospect of heavenly happiness, if we, resisting the motions and solicitations of God's Holy Spirit, continue obstinate in sin.

God

* Acts iv. 12.

† 2 Pet. i. 10.

God is always the same, unchangeable in his nature and properties; and eternal life is as much his gift now, as ever it was; and ever was as much his gift, as it is now. He refused to confer it on Adam, whom he had created innocent and holy, and to whom he had given his own blessed Spirit, because he sinned against his command: And will he not also refuse it to us, if we continue obstinate in sin against his command to repent? In other words—If Adam, by his disobedience, rendered himself incapable of heavenly happiness, and brought on himself the condemnation of God; why should not our obstinate continuance in disobedience render us incapable of heavenly happiness, and bring on us the condemnation of God also? If it be said that Christ has redeemed us from condemnation—on account of Adam's sin, I confess; and Christ's redemption restores us to the hope of eternal happiness in heaven, and to the capacity of receiving the Holy Spirit of God as a principle of life in us, both which we lost in Adam. But I know not that Christ hath redeemed us from the penalty of our personal transgressions, but upon our repentance, and faith in his atonement. I presume not to set limits to the mercy of God, or to say how far it will be extended beyond what he hath revealed. But what he hath not revealed can be no ground of faith, or rule of practice to us.

It has been observed that the body of Adam in his innocency was not fit for the kingdom of heaven—the blessed presence of God. St. Paul has told us, “that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”* This was as true when Adam was created, as when St. Paul wrote it. His body, therefore, must have undergone some change from an earthly to a heavenly nature, before he could

VOL. I.

K k

have

* 1 Cor. xv. 50.

have inherited the happiness of the heavenly world. The instruments of this change were to be the Holy Ghost, and the Tree of Life. This will appear by considering what must be done for our bodies to fit them for the happiness of heaven. According to St. Paul, they must be changed from an earthly to a heavenly nature.* The body, he saith, "is sown," that is, born into this world, "in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural† body; it is raised a spiritual body." He saith also, that the animal body is first, and afterward that which is spiritual.

There could be no reason for this process with regard to us, but because it was to have been the process with Adam, from whom by natural generation we receive our earthly, natural, or animal body. Accordingly the Apostle quotes the history of Adam's creation; "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul," referring evidently to the Text; "the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." This is not to be found in so many words in the present copies of the Old Testament, but is manifestly an allusion to Genesis i. 27, "So God created man in his own image," and shews what the Apostle understood by the image of God in man, through which the body of Adam was to be made spiritual, and exalted to immortality in heaven, even the quickening life-giving Spirit of God. By him also our bodies are to be quickened from the dust of the grave, or changed in a moment at the last trump, and made like to the image of the *last* Adam, the Lord from heaven.

To this all-powerful Spirit is the resurrection of the just from the grave, and the change of those of them

* 1 Cor. xv. 42—54. † Greek *σῶμα ψυχικόν*, an animal body.

them who shall be found alive at the coming of Christ, when the last trumpet shall sound, always ascribed: The resurrection also of Christ himself is attributed to this operation.*

Should it be observed, that the resurrection will be universal; that all who have ever died shall rise at the last day, without regard to the distinction which Christianity makes between those who have, and those who have not the Spirit of God; I beg it may be noted, that it is never said that the wicked shall be raised by the Spirit of God which dwelleth in them. This is peculiar to the righteous, to those who are led and live by the Spirit, who are heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. The wicked shall be raised by the power of God, not as joint heirs with Christ, his beloved Son, but as the children of Satan, his enemy; not to a happy immortality in heaven, but to die the second death. "All that are in the graves," said Christ, "shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."† In this the great difference between the righteous and the wicked, with respect to the resurrection, will consist: The former shall be raised by the dwelling of that Spirit in them who raised up Jesus from the dead: By him their mortal bodies shall be quickened, and made like unto the glorious body of the Son of God: For as they have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so they must bear the image of the heavenly. But the wicked shall be raised by the power of God, not to everlasting life, but to everlasting contempt.‡

The other means of spiritualizing the body of Adam, and making it fit for heaven, it has been observed,

* 1 Pet. iii. 18. Rom. viii. 11.

† John v. 28, 29.

‡ Dan. xii. 2.

observed, was the Tree of Life. That this tree had the property of continuing life to Adam, appears from the guard God put over it, to prevent his eating of it after his fall.* And that the immortality he was to obtain from it related to another life, appears from the impossibility there was that all his descendants should find room to live in this world, had they continued immortal; and also from the care God took to prevent their eating of it after the disobedience of their father.

This opinion is confirmed by the allusions which St. John makes to this Tree, as a means of the immortality of heaven—"To him that overcometh will I give, saith the Spirit, to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."† Paradise here cannot mean the garden of Eden, for that is passed away and gone; but, under the figure of that garden, is expressed the more immediate presence of God in heaven; or, in the lowest sense, the intermediate state of the souls of the righteous, between death and the resurrection.

Again, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have a right to the Tree of Life, and may enter in through the gates into the city."‡ The allusion here to the garden of Eden as a type of heaven, and to the Tree of Life as the means of immortality, is evident; and the reference to the residence of Adam in the garden, and to his right to eat of that tree, till he was fitted to be translated to the immortality of heaven, and to his being cast out of the garden upon his disobedience, must be manifest to every attentive reader.

Upon comparing together what has been said on this subject, it will, I trust, appear, that the covenant of our God with us is of the same nature, and very similar to his covenant with Adam. By the new covenant

* Gen. iii. 23, 24. † Rev. ii. 7. ‡ xxii. 14.

covenant of grace through Jesus Christ, we are put into a state of trial, every one for himself; and have the blessed hope and promise of regaining, by our faith and obedience, that heavenly immortality which Adam, through his want of faith and his disobedience, lost for himself and his posterity. We are, by the grace of Holy Baptism, taken out of the world, and put into the Church of Christ, the antitype of the garden into which Adam was put, when God took him from the world in which he had been created.* The same Holy Spirit is given to us at our Baptism, as the governing principle of life, which was given to Adam at his creation, as the principle of his life. The Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, is appointed for us, as the Tree of Life was for Adam; to be to us the principle or means of immortality;† to keep up a lively sense of our dependence on God, and of the atonement of Christ; to be the pledge of God's love to us, and the seal of the forgiveness of those sins of which we repent; and to be the means of continuing to us, and of increasing in us the power of the Holy Spirit, without whom we can do nothing which is good, and through whom we can do all things which God requires of us.

In this view, our whole salvation is from God; not only the immortality of heaven, but every thing which leads to it, even all our ability to do that which is well pleasing to God. He created man in innocence, and gave his Holy Spirit to be the principle of his life, and to conduct him to eternal felicity. And when he had forfeited, and thrown away the precious gift, HE redeemed him by his Son, and restored to him the Holy Spirit as the principle of his life, to lead him to bliss and glory immortal. Be it then our care to live according to the motions and

* Gen. ii. 8.

† John vi. 53, &c.

and inspirations of goodness and holiness which this Spirit puts into our hearts, that through his guidance we may attain that immortal life for which our gracious Creator designed us,

DISCOURSE

DISCOURSE XI.

PART I.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE HISTORY OF CAIN AND ABEL.

GEN. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. *And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering, he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.*

THE tragical end of Abel's life has always excited the pity of the human heart, and seldom fails to awaken a strong curiosity to be made acquainted with all the circumstances that led to it, particularly with the provocation which excited the rancorous resentment of his unhappy Brother. That the preference which God gave to Abel's offering excited the resentment of Cain, is plain. But, to what was this preference owing? This is a question which

which has been frequently asked, and has often divided the opinions of the learned.

That there was a real difference between the offerings of Cain and Abel, is clear from the history. Cain brought of the fruits of the ground, Abel of the firstlings of his flock. And, that there was something wrong in Cain, respecting his offering, is certain. *God is no respecter of persons,** and would have accepted Cain as well as Abel, had he been equally worthy.

There is a question that presents itself, which ought to be attended to: the discussion of it, probably, may throw light upon the subject, and guide us to the point we wish to ascertain. The question is, How came Cain and Abel to bring offerings at all, of which Moses had said nothing, till he gives this history of Cain and Abel? Was it the dictate of nature? or, was it the command of God, that induced these brothers to bring offerings to him?

Before the commencement of Christianity, all the nations of the world, of whom history has given us any account, were in the practice of offering sacrifices to their gods, to appease their anger, and render them propitious to their wishes. And all the heathen nations continue it to this day. There must, therefore, have been some common origin from which the practice was derived, for nothing else will account for its universal prevalence. But, when we recollect that all the nations of the earth are descended from one common Ancestor, Noah; and that he offered a burnt offering to the Lord, of "every clean beast," and "of every clean fowl,"† when he came out of the ark, we are satisfied that the practice was derived from him. We must also suppose, that he derived it from the practice before the flood.

But

* Acts x. 34.

† Gen. viii. 20.

But still the question will recur, How came the first sacrifice to be offered? It does not seem to be the dictate of nature or reason; for no principle of reason would ever suggest, that killing a brute animal and offering it in sacrifice to God, would avert his anger, or procure his favour. The idea of averting the anger of God, presupposes some offence which had provoked him. Now, nature and reason know of no atonement for offences against God, but leave the sinner exposed to the penalty of his transgressions. Neither nature nor reason, therefore, could dictate the offering of sacrifices. To some other source we must ascribe them. The most probable is, that they were the particular institution of God, and that Cain and Abel were instructed in the use of them by their father Adam.

In Genesis it is said, "Unto Adam also, and to his wife, did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them."* We are not told how these skins were obtained. They could not be the skins of beasts killed for food; no permission being given to eat animal food, till after the flood. To depend on the skins of those which died by accident and disease, was too precarious; not to mention, that both accident and disease often render the skins of animals unfit for use. Most probably, Adam and Eve were directed to use the skins of those which were slain in sacrifice for clothing, and that this rude covering continued, till human sagacity contrived that which was more convenient.

Upon this principle of divine institution, we may account for the universality of sacrifices; on every other, it remains utterly inexplicable. The practice descended from Adam to Noah, and from him to all his posterity. It is remarkable, that no nation, of whom we have any account, ever pretended to be

VOL. I.

L 1

the

* Gen. iii. 21.

the inventors of sacrifices, but always pleaded the custom of their ancestors; and supposed they sufficiently justified their religious rites by saying, *they worshipped their gods according to the custom of their country*. They sometimes acknowledged, that such a person taught them to worship such a god, with such particular rites and sacrifices; but the invention of sacrifices no one ever claimed.*

Another circumstance worthy of observation is, that however idolatry increased, and the objects of it were multiplied, men ever retained the idea that the offering of animals in sacrifice was either *propitiatory*, to avert the anger of the gods, and procure their favour; or *federal*, to confirm a covenant, by calling the gods to witness the sincerity of their intentions; and that the offering of the fruits of the earth was *eucharistic*, to express their gratitude for the blessings of providence.

Should an account be demanded of the wisdom and propriety of the Institution, let it be remembered, that as the institution is not human, but divine, reason may not be able fully to point out, or comprehend its propriety. Revelation declares to us the will of God, but it does not always assign the reasons of his directions. In this case, however, I trust,

* The heathen sometimes introduced into their temples the Gods of other nations. With the God they introduced his particular worship, supposing he had directed it, and would be pleased with no other. On this ground the nations proceeded, whom the king of Assyria sent to inhabit the country from which he had removed the Israelites, 2 Kings xvii. Being afflicted with lions, they supposed it was because they *knew not the manner of the god of the land*, i. e. did not worship him with his proper worship. This reason was thought so good a one by the Assyrian monarch, that he sent an Israelitish Priest back, to dwell there, and teach them the manner of the god of the land. By which means the worship of the true God was mixed with the idolatry of those nations—*They feared the Lord, and served their graven images.*

trust, enough will appear to every considerate person, to convince him of the propriety of the measure, and of the wisdom of God in appointing it.

Let us, then, bear in mind the condition in which Adam was after his transgression, while we take a short view of the divine procedure in this matter; turning our eye at the same time to the Mosaic dispensation, in which the whole œconomy of sacrifices is particularly displayed.

The penalty of Adam's transgression was death; and to this penalty, in its full force, he must have submitted, had not the grace of God interposed, and placed him under a new dispensation through the Mediator, who was intimated to him when God said, *The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent.** To Abram was the promise of a Mediator more explicitly made, when God said to him, "In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed."† Of him, Jacob prophesied under the name of *Shiloh*.‡ Moses spake of him as a Prophet whom God would raise up among the Israelites, like unto him; that is, a Mediator, a Lawgiver, and Promulger of a new dispensation.§ To David he was promised as his descendant. The succeeding Prophets not only mention him, but mention him in more clear and explicit terms, as the time of his appearance approached. Till, when God saw best, Jesus Christ was born, literally the seed of a woman only, the descendant of Abram, and of David; in whom all the prophecies, whether relating to his birth, life, death, resurrection, or ascension, were exactly fulfilled.

But the Prophets had not only described this Mediator, so that he might be known when he appeared: they had declared, that he should be a sacrifice for sin, suffering, in our stead, the punishment

of

* Gen. iii. 15. † xxii. 18. ‡ xlix. 10. § Deut. xviii. 15.

of sin, that he might reconcile us to God, by obtaining remission of sins for us—that “he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities—that the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed—that he was cut off out of the land of the living; and, for the transgression of my people was he stricken—that God should make his soul an offering for sin—that he was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”*

In the New Testament, we find that all this hath been done by Jesus Christ—that he “gave himself a ransom for all†—that he is the propitiation for our sins‡—that God hath made him, who knew no sin, sin for us§—that by his own blood, he obtained eternal redemption for us||”—that to him all the sacrifices and rites of the Jewish dispensation had respect; from him derived their whole virtue; and, in his sacrifice of himself, were all completed and done away—that through faith in his atonement and intercession, we are made partakers of the benefits of his mediation; and, by his merit, of eternal life, being delivered from the death of the body by the resurrection from the dead.¶ We are also told, that through faith in him, the old Patriarchs and Prophets obtained acceptance with God, and the hope of a better life.**

Bearing these things in mind, there will appear the highest probability that sacrifices were instituted, immediately after the fall, as the means by which Adam and his posterity were to obtain remission of their sins. He had fallen under the sentence of death by his disobedience, and his posterity were, from the very

* Isa. liii. 5, 8, 10, 12. † 1 Tim. ii. 6. ‡ 1 John ii. 2.
§ 2 Cor. v. 21. || Heb. ix. 12.

¶ See the Epistle to the Hebrews. ** Heb. xi. 13, &c.

very necessity of nature, involved in his calamity. God graciously received him to mercy through the Mediator, and directed him to offer some particular animals in sacrifice, as the means of obtaining mercy for the sins he should commit. To ask why this was done, is to demand a reason of God for the directions of his wisdom. That sacrifices were appointed by God, was enough for Adam. He had sinned, and must be either admitted to mercy, or punished without mercy. That the mercy of God was extended to him, was a favour of which we have no right to complain. But mercy, without an atonement, would have destroyed the moral government of God, on which the happiness of all his creatures depends. A Mediator, therefore, who should be Adam's substitute, was a wise, as well as merciful provision. Adam and his posterity were thereby rescued from destruction, and the authority of God, as moral governor of the world, was preserved.

The sacrificing of animals in token of faith in the future atonement of the Mediator (or, if God revealed no more to Adam than that his sins should thereby be pardoned) was certainly well calculated to impress his mind with a lively sense of the atrocious nature of sin, and of the severity of God against it. How must his heart have been rent within him, when he beheld the convulsions of an innocent lamb in the agonies of death, inflicted by his own hand, and on his own account—to make expiation for his disobedience to his Creator!

Let it also be recollected, that, through the Mediator, Adam was put under a new covenant, or condition of life. The first covenant was broken, and life could no longer be had by it. God was pleased to substitute the covenant of grace; by which penitence and unfeigned obedience were accepted
instead

instead of innocence. It appears from all ancient history, that covenants were always confirmed by the sacrifice of some animal; the covenanting parties thereby binding themselves under the curse of death to be true to their agreement. So common had this practice become, that the same word, signifying *to strike*, was familiarly used among the Latins to express either the making of a covenant, or the killing of a sacrifice.* Several instances of this practice are recorded in the Bible; as between God and Abraham; between Abraham and Abimelech; and between Isaac and Abimelech.† For this reason, Moses calls the blood of the sacrifices, which he sprinkled on the people at Horeb, “The blood of the covenant.”‡

It is not, therefore, unreasonable to suppose, that the new covenant, under which God placed Adam, was ratified by the sacrifice of some animal, as a token and assurance from God to him, that he would remember his covenant, and fulfil the promise he had given: and, on the part of Adam, it was an acknowledgment of his guilt, and of his deserving to die; it was also a declaration of his penitence, of his faith in the promised seed, and of his grateful acquiescence in the new covenant of grace, under which the goodness of his Creator had placed him.

Besides, what is called a *Covenant*, is also sometimes called a *Testament*. St. Paul speaks of the Mosaic and Christian covenants under the stile of two testaments. He calleth the former the *Old Testament*, not so much because it was prior in time, as because it was to wax old and be done away by the full manifestation of the New Testament, or Covenant, under which, through the Mediator, Adam

* *Ferire*, or *icere fœdus*. Hence probably came the English phrase, *striking a bargain*.

† Gen. xv. 21, 26.

‡ Exod. xxiv. 8.

Adam was placed.* What Moses calls "the blood of the covenant," he calls "the blood of the testament."† Now, as the same Apostle argues, a testament supposeth the death of the testator, because it can have no force while the testator liveth. This idea leads us to consider the benefits and blessings of the redemption of Christ, as legacies left us by his Will, to which we could have no right but through his death. What, now, could be more proper to confirm the new covenant made with Adam through the Mediator, than some symbol which prefigured the death of the testator, through whose will, or testament, he was to receive, as a legacy, remission of sins and eternal life? And what more proper symbol could be devised to represent the death of the testator slain for the sins of the world, than the slaying of some innocent animal, a lamb, or kid, a young bullock or heifer, and offering it to God as the memorial of his covenant through the Mediator? As Adam must have been constituted the Priest to offer this sacrifice, nothing, as has been observed, could give him a more lively idea of the detestable nature of sin, of the justice of God in the punishment of it, or of his mercy in accepting an atonement for the wilful disobedience of which he had been guilty.

It is not to be supposed that Adam neglected to teach his children the ordinances and institutions of God, upon which so much depended; to shew them what they meant, and to what they pointed, that they might, in the due use of them, obtain remission of their sins, and the favour of God. We have, therefore, a right to suppose that the offerings of Cain and Abel were brought, in consequence of instructions which they had received from him.

How

* Heb. viii. 13. † Heb. x. 29.

How often sacrifices were to be repeated, whether on stated days, or only when wilful transgressions called for them, cannot be determined. Probably on both occasions. Every wilful transgression required penitence, and faith in the Mediator, that it might be forgiven. The unavoidable failings and miscarriages of life required some stated days of humiliation and contrition: and nothing could better express such penitence and humiliation, or more effectually call forth faith and hope in the promise of God, than the repetition of animal sacrifices.

That there were some stated seasons for this service seems to be intimated in the Text, by the phrase "In process of time;" that is, when time had gone on, or was come about. Cain and Abel, probably, brought their offerings to Adam, whom God had appointed his Priest, to signify and point out the Priestly office of the great Mediator, who was to make effectual atonement for sin.

The notion of every man being his own Priest has no foundation either in reason or authority. Every thing of real value in religion (understanding religion to mean the method of reconciliation with God) must be by God's appointment, because to his appointment it owes all its excellence and efficacy. That the Priesthood owes all its virtue to his appointment, we know from St. Paul, who saith, "No man taketh this honour to himself but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. And that even Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest," that is, did not assume the Priesthood, but was appointed by HIM "that said to him, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee:" And again, in another place, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.*"

Revealed

* Heb. v. 4, 5, 6.

Revealed religion, by which only we can learn the means of reconciliation with God, hath always had in it types, symbols, or sacraments, all pointing to one grand design—the mediation of Christ, and his atonement for sin. As these symbols or sacraments can have no natural virtue to deliver us from the penalty of sin, they must owe all their efficacy to the appointment of God, both as to their matter and manner. Where, therefore, God hath appointed a particular person or order to superintend and administer them, the ministry of that person or order becomes essential to the institution, and no other person can validly officiate in it. The probability, therefore, is strong, that Cain and Abel brought their offerings to Adam, and that he had an altar on which to offer them. Had Cain and Abel officiated for themselves, each on his own altar, there could have been no reason why they should bring their offerings at all. They might have offered them at home; for, by the same rule that every man is his own priest, every man's house is his temple.

The truth is, sacrifice implies both an altar and a priest: and though nothing is said about an altar before the flood, yet when Noah made his offering upon his coming out of the ark, it is expressly said that “Noah builded an altar unto the Lord.”* Either, then, Noah had a particular direction to do so, of which no mention is made, or he did what had been usual in the antediluvian world. The last supposition is the more probable, as we do not find that God made any new revelation to Noah concerning the terms of acceptance with himself. With regard to the person officiating, we read of none, unless by God's particular order, except the head of the family. And most probably, when a number

Vol. I.

M m

of

of families lived together, the eldest, who was their chief, was also, by God's appointment, their priest. Under the Mosaic dispensation, this disposition was altered, God calling the Tribe of Levi to his particular service instead of the first-born of Israel.

It has been said, that revealed religion always had types, symbols, or sacraments in it. If we pursue this idea a little further, it will throw light on our subject.

In Christ's religion, Baptism is a type or figure of regeneration; that is, of the new life through him, which we then begin. The Eucharist, or sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, is commemorative of the sacrifice of his death for the sins of the world. In the Mosaic religion, which began with Abraham, Circumcision signified mortification of the sensual appetites, and absolute submission to the will of God: The Passover was commemorative of the deliverance from Egyptian slavery, and figurative of deliverance from spiritual slavery, through the Mediator.

Nearly related to these are sacrifices. In the Patriarchal and Mosaic religions they were commemorative of the state of death into which sin brought Adam, and into which it brings all his posterity. They were a loud call to penitence and mortification, as well as strong expressions of them. Besides all this, they were symbols and prefigurations of the meritorious sacrifice for sin, which the Mediator was to make; and powerfully excited faith, and hope, and trust in his atonement and intercession.

The reason why symbols and sacraments have ever made part of the true religion, seems to be the two-fold nature of man. In his body he is an animal, living, and feeding, and receiving impressions from external objects by his senses, as other animals

animals do. To this animal body an immortal spirit is joined by his Creator, who breathed into him the *breath of lives*—the animal life, by which he became a living body or animal; and the spiritual, immortal principle, by which he became a *living soul*, capable of divine life, that is, of inward rectitude and holiness, from the inspirations of the Spirit of God. Complex in his nature, man required a complex religion, having outward types and figures accommodated to his bodily senses, and fitted to make impressions on them, that with his body he might serve God; and something also accommodated to the inward principle, the immortal soul, and calculated to call forth confidence in its Maker; love and gratitude, obedience and hope; and, in a sinful creature, penitence and contrition: so that the whole man, body and soul, might pay adoration and worship to his Almighty Creator. All this seems to have been done by the sacrifices and sacraments of the Patriarchs, of Moses, and of Christ.

As a corroborating circumstance, we find something of the same kind in the state of man's innocence. The garden of Eden seems to have been the Temple of God, where his more immediate presence was displayed, and his worship celebrated. The Tree of Life, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, were of a sacramental nature. It is idle to suppose that one material tree could confer immortality by any intrinsic virtue of its own; or that another should, by its own nature, bring on death by conferring the knowledge of good and evil. The Tree of Life was the symbol or sacrament of immortality, and Adam's eating of it was an humble acknowledgment that he held his life a free gift from God. It was also a visible sign, and a sensible assurance to him, on the part of God, that while he continued faithful and obedient, he should live and be happy. The

The Tree of Knowledge, on the other hand, was the symbol or figure of death. Adam was forbidden to eat of it, because he was not to know death or any evil. It stood with the Tree of Life, in the midst of the garden, to put him in mind, whenever he approached the Tree of Life, of his constant dependence on God, who had given him freely to eat of all the trees of the garden, except of that one; thereby teaching him, that he was to live as God directed, to remain in his hand, and be in all things subject to his will. It was also a visible sign, and standing denunciation to him, that if he did eat of it, he should forfeit the favour of his Creator, lose his immortality, and surely die.

Here, then, we see the malignity of Adam's disobedience. By eating of the forbidden tree, he made an open declaration, that he would no longer hold life and immortality of God; no longer remain under his direction; but would know good and evil in himself, and seek his happiness in his own way, by pursuing good and avoiding evil according to his own reason and judgment, independently of his Creator. Rejecting the revealed religion of God, he set up for a Philosopher, and was for introducing a religion of nature, by making his own reason and understanding the rule and measure of his duty.

The conduct of God, when he banished Adam from the garden, adds strength to the opinion, that the Tree of Life was of a sacramental nature. He placed Cherubim and a flaming sword, at the entrance of the garden, to guard the way of the Tree of Life;* because Adam had not only rendered himself unworthy of it, by rejecting the immortality he was to enjoy in the use of it, but had brought himself into a state which made immortality a curse rather than a blessing.

* Gen. iii. 24.

DISCOURSE XI.

PART II.

HAVING established the fact, that sacrifices were appointed by God immediately after the fall, to be types and symbols of the sacrifice and atonement of the Mediator; and shewn that there was great goodness and mercy, propriety and wisdom, in their institution, we will more particularly attend to the conduct of Cain and Abel.

“In process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.”

Offering to God the fruits of the earth as an Eucharist, or tribute of thanks for the blessings of providence, hath been as generally practised in the world, as the sacrificing of animals. Cain, we find, brought such an offering to God. Probably, therefore, both kinds had been commanded at the same time. Under the Law, the fruits of the earth were called the *meat-offering*,* probably their original name, because, when they were first appointed, the fruits of the earth were the *meat* or food of men. Of the Eucharistic kind was the sacrifice of bread and wine which Melchisedec offered, when he met Abram returning from the defeat of the kings, and blessed him, and gave thanks to God for his victory.† For Melchisedec “was the priest of the most high God;”

* Levit. ii. 1.

† Gen. xiv. 18, 20.

God;" and as such Abram acknowledged him, and paid him the tythe of his spoils.

No reason can be given why offerings should have been made to God, unless it be that he had commanded them. "He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him."* Without this faith there could have been no ground for making any offerings at all; and without the command of God, there could have been no ground of this faith.

"Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel, and to his offering: But unto Cain, and to his offering, he had not respect."

The question, Why Cain's offering was rejected, and Abel's accepted, has been often asked, and a variety of answers has been returned. To recite them all would be tedious. What appears the most reasonable is as follows:

Abel brought the best of the firstlings of his flock, a sacrifice of atonement for his sins, approaching God in the way he had commanded, as a sinner acknowledging his guilt, and as a penitent imploring mercy and forgiveness.† Cain brought only the Eucharistic offering, the fruits of the earth, to thank God for the increase of his tillage, but did not approach God with the offering of atonement which he had commanded, seeking remission of his sins, as a penitent sensible of his guilt.

This

* Heb. xi. 6.

† Under the Mosaic dispensation, the expiatory and meat offerings were brought together. Probably Abel did so, though Moses does not mention it. And may not this be intimated by St. Paul, Heb. xi. 4. where he saith, "Abel offered a more excellent," *πλεονα*, a fuller, a more abundant, "sacrifice than Cain?"

This account seems to be confirmed by the Author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, who says, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness, that he was righteous; God testifying of his gifts."* In the language of Scripture, to do a thing *in* faith, *by* faith, or *through* faith, means to do it because God has commanded it, or has promised to accept it. Because the word of God is the ground of faith; so that where God has given no command, nor made any promise, there can be no faith. The same remark will apply to the other expression, "Abel obtained witness that he was righteous." To be righteous, is to obey the commands of God, to do his will, to walk in his ways.† Abel, therefore, by bringing the offering which God had directed, "obtained witness that he was righteous"—"God testifying," by accepting "his gifts," that he had obeyed his command. Cain brought only part of the offering God had required—the first fruits of the earth, by way of thanksgiving; but not the sacrifice of atonement to testify his penitence, and faith in the command and promise of God. Therefore his offering was rejected, not being the offering God had required.

In what manner God shewed his acceptance of Abel's offering is not said. The Jews and many of the first Christians believed it was by fire descending from heaven upon it, as it afterward did upon the sacrifices of Abraham, and Elijah, and David.‡

Should it be asked, To what place did Cain and Abel carry their offerings? I have only *opinion* to give in answer; and suppose it was to the entrance of the garden, where the Shechina, or presence of God was manifested in the Cherubim and flaming sword:

* Heb. xi. 4.

† Luke i. 6.

‡ Gen. xv. 17. 1 Kings xviii. 38. 1 Chron. xxi. 26.

sword: And possibly it was from the flame of this sword that fire issued to consume the sacrifices which were acceptably offered.

That there was some place where God manifested his presence by a visible glory, appears from the complaint of Cain under his sentence of banishment, "From thy presence shall I be hid." And when the sentence took effect, and he was driven away from the rest of the human race, it is said of him, "And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord."* There was, therefore, some visible token or manifestation of God, called his face, or presence, where worship was paid to him, and where offerings were made; and none seems so likely as the place where God had placed the guard of the Tree of Life, that men, now unworthy to eat of it, might worship towards it. So that one part of Cain's punishment was his being cut off from the privileges of public worship, and no longer permitted to make his offerings in the presence of God.

When Cain saw that his offering was rejected, and his brother preferred before him, he "was very wroth, and his countenance fell." God had rejected his offering, but he had not cast him off. He knew the rancorous resentment which he harboured against his brother, for he knows all things. In mercy he tried to reclaim him, and bring him to a better mind; "why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" said God to him. "If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?† and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door." That is, 'Why art thou angry with thy brother, and why art thou gloomy and sullen toward him? If thou doest well, and, with true penitence and faith, bringest such an offering as I have commanded, to make

* Gen. iv. 14, 16.

† Margin—Shalt thou not have the excellency?

make atonement for thy sins, as thy brother did, thou shalt be accepted, as thy brother was. But; if thou doest not well; but, through impenitency and unbelief, refuseth to bring the atonement I have directed, thy sin must remain with thee unforgiven.' God then assures him, that his brother should neither claim nor have any superiority over him on this account, but should continue to pay him all the respect and submission of a younger brother—"His desire shall be to thee, and thou shalt rule over him." But so deeply had malice rooted itself in Cain's heart, that, disregarding the admonitions and assurances of his Maker, he invited his unoffending and unsuspecting brother into the field, and there polluted the earth with the first human gore—setting an example of murder and slaughter, which has been too readily followed by infatuated man.

Some have supposed that Eve imagined Cain to have been the promised seed; and, under that impression, to have cried out with such rapture at his birth, "I have gotten a man from the Lord"—I have gotten *the man whom the Lord promised*. By imparting this sentiment to Cain, she may have excited expectations in him, which he feared would be cut off by his brother's being preferred before him. Or possibly Adam might have informed him of the dignity and privileges of the priesthood, and of his title to it, after his own death, by the right of primogeniture; and he may have apprehended the rivalry of his brother in that matter. From the assurance God gave him of his brother's disposition to pay him every regard he could have a right to expect, it is evident, something of this kind had taken fast hold of his sullen and gloomy temper, and had inflamed him with envy and jealousy.

It is an observation of St. Paul, that "whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning."

learning.”* And the design of preaching being not to amuse the mind with a tincture of useless knowledge, but to lead men to the true Mediator whom God hath appointed; to form the manners by penitence and faith, and bring them to that benevolence of mind and purity of heart which the Gospel requires; I hope to be indulged in drawing such reflections from the subject which has been before us, as may be of use to us, both as Christians and Men.

1. The example of Cain ought to teach us the necessity of repressing the first motions of wrath, and anger, and revenge. If they are neglected, it is impossible to tell to what desperate lengths they may proceed. People of quick tempers are the most subject to the sallies of impetuous anger, which, for a time, burns with fury. They should set a guard over themselves, for rage has no bounds. Time and attention will give them the victory over their tempers; nor will God’s assistance be wanting to their good endeavours.

It is happy for them and for mankind, that their passion lasts not long, and seldom settles into malice or revenge. The sullen and morose are most apt to indulge hatred and rancour. In duty and justice to themselves and to others, they ought earnestly to endeavour to mend the perversity of such a temper. Let them cultivate dispositions of humanity and benevolence, by seeking occasions of doing kind offices to others. Let them associate with good-tempered and cheerful, not with peevish and irritating company. Under this management, the temper will relax, the heart soften, and the mind acquire a mild turn—God will bless their endeavours, and crown them with success.

2. Envy

* Rom. xv. 4.

2. Envy and jealousy seem to have been the destruction of Cain. Let us be careful never to indulge them; for envy corrodes like poison, and jealousy burns like fire; nor is it easy to assuage the one, or quench the other. Particularly we should habituate ourselves to think with reverence, and speak with respect of all worthy characters, especially of such as are eminent for piety. The excellencies of others are a proper pattern for our imitation, and ought to excite our endeavours to become equally eminent. But, to envy those who are good; to be jealous lest God should have more regard for them than for us, will destroy, not only the peace of our own minds, but that love which we ought to bear to all men, and especially to those who worthily fill their station in the household of God. Besides,

God has declared himself to be "righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works;"* not respecting the persons of men, but treating them as they are; for which reason, his eyes are particularly over the righteous. If we wish to be in their number, it cannot be by envying and hating his servants, but by doing his will. Then shall we be dear to God and to all good men; and they will be dear to us. Envy, and jealousy, and wrath, and hatred will give place to love, and peace, and kindness—God will accept our offerings and prayers, and his loving-kindness shall be our reward.

3. The example of Cain ought to caution us against resisting or neglecting the admonitions of God. When God expostulated with Cain, on account of his resentment against his brother, instead of humbly submitting to the reproof, he hardened his heart, and gave himself up to the inspirations of him who "was a murderer from the beginning."†
God

* Psalm cxlv. 17.

† John viii. 44.

God indeed does not personally exhort with us, as he did with Cain: but he has a Vicegerent within us, who will not fail to admonish and reprove us, when we have done amiss. His Holy Spirit also joins his calls to repentance with the admonitions of Conscience. If we reject this voice of God within us, and harden our hearts against the motions of his Spirit, Conscience will cease to do his office, nor will his Spirit always strive with us. Should the voice of Conscience cease, and the solicitations of the Holy Spirit be withdrawn, because the callous state of our hearts renders us insensible, where shall we stop in the steep descent to perdition? or what security can we have against falling into the foulest crimes? Cain found none; and the murder of his brother became practicable to him, when he had rejected the admonitions of his God.

4. From the example of Cain, we may be taught another lesson—not to despise or neglect the ordinances of religion. That the institutions of the Christian Church are in a great degree disregarded by people of all ranks, cannot be doubted by those who attend to the subject. That many disregard them, because they think there is no reason for them, and that they may be as well saved without them, will be equally evident to all who will be at the pains to inquire into the matter. But, supposing we cannot see the reason of them, it will not follow that there is no reason in them, because we do not perceive it. Our inattention to them may be more in fault than any thing else. God has commanded them; and he certainly can see further, and knows better what is right for us than we do. We believe that he is good—He will not, therefore, command needless sacraments, and ineffectual institutions, without reason in their appointment, or benefit

ness in their use. Here then is a proper field for the exercise of faith. To do a thing because it is right, and we see the reason of it, is a just and proper conduct; but it is not the fruit of faith; it is only acting according to our reason and judgment. But to do it because God has commanded it; though we do not fully comprehend the reason of it, is an act of that faith which is highly agreeable to God, and without which it is impossible to please him.* That we might have been saved without the use of sacraments, had God so pleased, I have no inclination to deny: But the question is not about what God might have done, but what he has done. If he hath appointed the sacraments of his Church, that you may in the use of them obtain remission of your sins, and the grace of his Holy Spirit; your neglect of them is the neglect of your great privilege, and looks more like copying the example of Cain, than being deterred by it. He neglected the sacrifice God had appointed for the remission of his sins, because he had no penitent sense of them, or because he could not see the reason of the appointment—how the sacrificing of a lamb should take away his sins, or do him any good. You cannot suppose that you have no sins to be forgiven; and God forbid, you should be willing to die with the whole weight of them on your heads.

5. Consider the example of righteous Abel, and from him learn to apply to God, for the forgiveness of your sins, in the way he hath commanded—through his Son, the Mediator of the new covenant; and by the ordinances of his Church, which he hath appointed for that very purpose. And be assured, that if, with righteous Abel, “thou doest well”—with penitent heart and lively faith, bringest the offering that God requires; and, in unity with his Church,

* Heb. xi. 6.

Church, commemorate the death and satisfaction of Christ for the sin of the world, looking for pardon, and reconciliation with God, through him—thou shalt be accepted, as Abel was; and, through the word of God, shalt “obtain witness that thou art righteous”—that thy sins are forgiven thee—“God will testify of,” will accept “your gifts,” as he did his.

But if, with reprobate Cain, “thou doest not well”—refusest to apply for the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost, in the way God hath appointed—in the ordinances of his Church, the instituted means of his grace and heavenly benediction—“sin lieth at the door”—thy sins will remain unforgiven, and aggravated by thy disregard of the means appointed for the pardon of them.

DISCOURSE XII.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE WICKEDNESS AND DESTRUCTION OF THE OLD WORLD.

GEN. vi. 3. — *My Spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: Yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.*

THE Text acquaints us with the determination of God, to give up the old world to destruction. That is the meaning of the phrase, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." The next words give the reason of this determination, "For that he also is flesh." The import of which expression must be, that man was become altogether *fleshly*—sensual in his tempers and pursuits, regarding only the gratification of his bodily appetites, and giving himself up to the indulgence of his passions and lusts.

To be long-suffering toward sinners, and to bear with their perverseness; to wait for their amendment, and to do every thing to effect it, is the property of God, and his character from one end of the Bible to the other. We must, therefore, suppose, that the wickedness of the old world was become incorrigible, and past remedy. The appetites of the body had gained such an ascendancy over them, that the divine grace made no impression on them.

It

It may not be easy precisely to determine in what their degeneracy consisted. Unrestrained bodily appetites seem to have been the foundation of it; and it seems to have been universal, with the exception only of the family of Noah. Not that all were equally wicked; but all had sunk so deep in vice and sin, that God saw it best to sweep them all away. Probably this is always the case when nations are extirpated by divine judgments. Sodom and Gomorrah, the Canaanites, Jerusalem and Judea, are all examples of this conduct of God towards nations incorrigible in great wickedness.

Should it be doubted, whether unrestrained bodily appetites would produce that depravity of manners, which made it necessary for God to extirpate man from the earth, one family excepted; let it be considered, that sensual indulgence always produces selfishness; that selfishness will increase, as bodily appetites become stronger; and that they become stronger in the same proportion as they are indulged; that it is the property of selfishness to arrogate all enjoyment to itself; that its natural effect is jealousy of every one who may interfere with its pleasures, and envy against all who appear to enjoy largely the good things of this life. Accordingly, it is remarked of man, in the chapter of the Text, "that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, was only evil continually"—that "the earth was corrupt before God, and filled with violence."*

Should it be thought strange that the whole race of men should become so corrupt and wicked; I apprehend the fact is accounted for in the same chapter, and that it arose from the corruption of religion, or more properly, from a total disregard to all religion. The origin of this irreligious state is also pointed out, though in obscure terms. In the

the beginning of the chapter, there is a distinction made between the "daughters of men, and the sons of God." They are spoken of, as two different classes of people, which then first began to have a connection with each other.

In the last verse of the fourth chapter, after giving an account of the birth of Enos, it is added, "then began men to call upon the name of the Lord;" or, as it is translated in the margin of our Bibles, "to call by the name of the Lord." It is not to be supposed, that men then first began to call on, that is, to worship God. Cain and Abel offered sacrifice long before; and sacrifice implied prayer, and confession, and thanksgiving. But, about the time of the birth of Enos, men began to be called "by the name of the Lord;" that is, men began to call the true worshippers of God "by the name of the Lord"—"the sons," or children "of God."

Various has been the interpretation of these obscure phrases. What I suppose to be the best, is the following—That by "the sons of God," is meant the family of Seth, in which the true religion and worship of God was preserved, and the practice of virtue supported, by the instructions and examples of Adam, Seth, Enos, and other good men—that by the "daughters of men," is intended the family of Cain—that this distinction began to be made about the time that Enos was born—that the family of Cain is described by his daughters, because they first formed the connection with the descendants of Seth—that they are called "daughters of men," because the family of Cain were *men* merely of this world, and paid no regard to God and another life—and, that the "sons of God" intermarrying with the "daughters of men," the descendants of Cain, were led by them into a total disregard of God and religion. "Evil communications," we

know, "corrupt good manners."* An instance we have in kind in the Israelites, who were corrupted in their religion, and led into idolatry by the fair daughters of Moab.†

When Cain was banished from the family of Adam, it is not necessary to suppose he went far. A few days journey, when men were so few, would be a sufficient separation. From what is said of Cain, he must have been an irreligious and violent man, morose and malicious, and destitute of the soft feelings of humanity. It would not be strange, should he have neglected to inculcate on his children those religious and moral principles, of which he himself seems to have had but little impression. Without religious education, they would grow up to be *mere men* of this world, altogether fleshly, and without the sense of God or goodness.

From the great length of human life at that period, the inhabitants of the old world must have increased very fast; and the families of Cain and Seth, and of the other children of Adam, spreading every way, might, by the time mentioned in the Text, have become so near neighbours as to have ready intercourse with each other. "The sons of God seeing the daughters of men that they were fair," and probably as free in their manners as they were engaging in their persons, were enamoured of them, and "took them wives of all which they chose." The Text following immediately after the account of these marriages, shews that they had great influence in producing that corrupt and degenerate state, in which men were sunk so deep in sensuality, as to be altogether fleshly.

The next verse remarks, that "there were giants in the earth in those days." And afterward, the issue of the marriages of the sons of Seth with the daughters

* 1 Cor. xv. 33.

† Numb. xxv. 1, &c.

daughters of Cain, were "mighty men"—"men of renown." The word translated *giants*, does not necessarily signify men of great bulk of body, though that may be its primary meaning. It sometimes signifies men of great fierceness, violence, and wickedness; and that probably is its meaning in this place.* There is no natural reason why the marriages of which we are treating should produce men above the common size; but there is a natural reason why they should produce violent and wicked men.

The mother's influence, in forming the manners of children, is much greater than that of the father. Her tender and constant attentions call forth their first affections, and open their minds to any impressions she may choose to make on them. It is most probable that the daughters of Cain would educate their children in their own way; nor is it likely, the fathers who, though of the family of Seth, had shewn so little attachment to religious principles as to marry into the family of Cain, would give themselves much trouble about the matter. The consequence was, the children became *giants*—men of fierce, vindictive, and violent tempers—unrestrained by any moral or religious principles. As these marriages became more numerous, the family of Seth was more and more corrupted; till, the degeneracy becoming universal, "the earth was filled with violence"—injustice and cruelty, rapine and murder.

By the giants mentioned in the fifth verse, the descendants of Cain are intended—fierce, bloody, and lawless. By the "mighty men, men of renown," in the latter part of the verse, is meant the issue of the marriages of the sons of Seth with the daughters of Cain, which, under the evil principles and examples

* See the discourse of Mr. Jos. Mede on Prov. xxi. 16.

examples of the mothers, became giants like the Cainites—"mighty men" in rapine and violence—"men of renown" in war and bloodshed. And should it be supposed that the family of Seth was conquered; and the best and most religious, who might have endeavoured to restrain those sons of violence, were murdered by them, there can be no absurdity in the supposition. Man was become altogether "flesh"—"every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually"—"the earth was corrupt before God; and the earth was filled with violence."

If this be the true meaning of the passages under consideration, they give a dreadful picture of the old world, God and religion, virtue and morality banished from the earth; good men murdered; law and civil government destroyed, or the governors and judges become as abandoned as the rest; appetite, and lust, and passion, anger, and malice, and revenge let loose to ravage the world, as any one had strength and opportunity to do it.

What could be done with a race so abandoned; sunk so deep in sensual indulgence, that the Spirit of God could no longer strive with them? The sentence of destruction passed against them, yet with the merciful suspension of "an hundred and twenty years." So long God determined to wait for their repentance, that he might have mercy on them. The threatenings of God, therefore, however absolute in their terms, are suspended on the behaviour of the sinner. If he repent, the threatening has answered the purpose of God better than the execution of it could have done, and becomes of none effect. If he return to his wickedness, the threatening recovers its force, and is again armed with all its terrors. The instance of the Ninevites will serve for an example. By the command of
God,

God, Jonah pronounced inevitable destruction against them, " Yet forty days and Ninevah shall be overthrown."* They repented and humbled themselves with fasting, and God withheld his destroying hand. Again they returned to their evil courses, and total destruction came on them, about two hundred years after—The Medes and Babylonians joining their armies, took the city after a siege of two years, and so intirely destroyed it, that, when a few centuries had passed, its situation could not be known.

And, that God would have forborne the destruction of the old world, had they repented of their wickedness, we have reason to suppose, not only from instances of similar conduct, but from his so long delaying to execute his vengeance on them; from his employing Noah to preach repentance and righteousness of life to them; and from his commanding him to build the ark, to be a manifest token that he, at least, believed the threatenings he had denounced against them.

From these circumstances we get also a sure proof, that the meaning of the expression in the Text, " My Spirit shall not always strive with man," is not that God withdrew his Holy Spirit from them, and left them under an incapacity of repenting, but that he would not always bear with them; and that unless they did repent under the preaching of Noah, he would, at the end of " an hundred and twenty years," bring the threatened destruction on them.

Let us now reflect, whether God did not do every thing that could be done, to preserve this people in virtue and goodness. And, that we may judge with more exactness, we must recollect, that Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years an instructor and example of righteousness—that Seth his son, and Enoch the sixth in descent from him, were

* Jonah iii. 4.

were men remarkable for their piety, and highly applauded for their faith and virtue. That Enoch particularly was a prophet, and denounced the judgments of God upon the impenitent, we have the testimony of St. Jude.* Now, Enoch lived after the birth of Noah an hundred years, before he was translated. So that God never left the world without instructors, and examples of virtue and religion.

Let it also be remembered, that when Cain committed violence on his brother, God drove him away from the society of Adam and his family, that they might have no intercourse, nor form any connection with him. To this let it be added, that when their wickedness became so great as to draw the threat of destruction from God, he commissioned Noah to denounce his vengeance against them, and exhort them to repentance, for an hundred and twenty years, "while the ark was preparing."† Of the design of this building they must have been informed—such of them, at least, as lived near. Yet it does not appear that Noah made one convert among them; so hardened were they in their impiety. Totally immersed in sensuality, "they ate, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded, they married and were given in marriage, till the day Noah entered into the ark, when the flood came, and swept them all away."‡ In this dreadful day of retribution, Noah only found favour with God; and he, with his family, was preserved in the ark which, through faith in God's word, he had builded.

In his conduct, Noah is set as a pattern of eminent piety and faith.§ And, to retain his integrity when all were corrupted; to fear his God, and denounce his

* Jude v. 14.

† 1 Pet. iii. 20.

‡ Matt. xxiv. 37. Luke xvii. 26.

§ Heb. xi. 7.

his threats, when the whole earth was filled with violence; to exhort to repentance when every imagination of the hearts of men was only and continually evil; to persist in this conduct an hundred and twenty years; and to build the ark for his own safety, amidst the scoffs and revilings of a fierce, abandoned, and lawless people, argues such a principle of obedience to God, such trust and confidence in him, as was never exceeded.

The view of the antediluvian world which has been before us, should convince us of the danger of sensual indulgence. "Fleshly lusts, which, an Apostle hath told us, war against the soul,"* seem to have been the cause of that horrid depravity into which they had fallen. The testimony of God is express, that the habitual indulgence of them brought the deluge of waters upon the world. It led men into all manner of violence, and rendered them irreclaimable by all that could be done for them.

Sensual gratifications seem particularly to indispose the mind for the reception of divine knowledge, to harden the heart against the impressions of divine grace, and render all motives to repentance ineffectual: Nor is there any state against which we are oftener, or more earnestly cautioned by the inspired servants of God. The holy Psalmist hath described the whole process of this wickedness—It swells the heart of the ungodly with pride, so that "God is not in all his thoughts"—It preventeth him from seeing the judgments of God—It filleth his mouth with deceit and cursing, his soul with confidence that he shall never come into adversity—It hardeneth his heart in cruelty and murder, for he lieth in wait to "murder the innocent," and encourageth himself that God shall never see nor regard it.† Our blessed Redeemer bore strong testimony against
a life

* 1 Pet. ii. 11. † Psa. x.

a life of sensuality, in the parable of the rich man who said to his soul, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: Take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry."* To it St. James refers the origin of war, with all its horrid consequences.† The admonitions of St. Paul against it are too numerous to be recited here: I shall content myself with one. He makes it essential to the character of good christians, that they "crucify, deny, and keep in subjection the flesh with the affections and lusts."‡ These authorities ought to have their full influence on us, to convince us of the great danger of a life of sensual gratification, and to induce us to keep all bodily appetites under the government of reason and religion.

The view we have taken of the state of the world, before the deluge, should convince us of the impropriety and danger of forming intimate connections with irreligious and profane persons. The impediments in our way to heaven, in every situation, are great and many, and we ought not to increase and strengthen them by our own voluntary imprudence. No one can fully know the baneful influence of profane and wicked company, but he who has felt its force, and smarted under the effects of its contagion. What makes the misfortune the greater is, that few intirely recover from the wounds it inflicts: If they do, it is with such deep scars as, through their whole life, make them remember and lament their folly. No man wrote more from his own experience than the Author of the Book of Proverbs; nor does any book contain so many cautions against taking the wicked for companions, lest we should be carried by their pernicious example into the broad way of folly and sin, which leadeth to destruction.

And,

* Luke xii. 19.

† Jam. iv. 4.

‡ Gal. v. 24.

And, if the danger of profligate companions be as great, as the admonitions of the inspired servants of God, and the experience of the world declare it to be, it ought to have its full effect in preventing us from forming the closest possible connection in this world, with such characters. The imprudent matrimonial connections between the family of Seth and the reprobate family of Cain, corrupted their faith and morals, their religion and virtue; relaxed the education of their children; and, by breeding up a race of fierce and voluptuous men, sunk the world in sensuality, and filled it with violence.

By matrimony was the earth first peopled, and by it is the succession of men preserved. To parents, and to mankind in general, it is a matter of importance that children be trained up to be good members of society, and heirs of eternal glory. It must, therefore, be a matter of importance with whom we connect ourselves in marriage, that no impediment be thrown in the way of the good education of our children, or of our own advancement in piety and holiness. These are objects, for the loss of which no advantages of wealth, or honour, or pleasure can make compensation; and for which they ought all to be sacrificed, if they come in competition with them.

The destruction of the old world ought to be a solemn warning to us of the certainty and severity of the judgments of God against impenitent sinners; and a serious call, as well as a strong motive to repentance, and amendment of life. God hath, indeed, graciously promised, that he will not again visit the earth with a deluge of waters to the destruction of mankind; and refers us to his Bow in the clouds, as a token that he does remember his promise. Yet it is most certain, that the wickedness of men does bring on them the judgments of

God. Sodom and Gomorrha, Egypt and Nineveh, Babylon, Tyre, and Jerusalem, put this matter beyond a doubt. Their destruction was either visibly from heaven, or clearly foretold by God's holy prophets. And, however destructions which happen by wars, famine, pestilence, tempests, inundations, earthquakes, may be and are by the pride of philosophy ascribed to nature; the understanding Christian knows that nature is the creature and instrument of God; that all causes and events are in his hands; and that he directeth them as he pleaseth. How far the sins of particular men may deserve, or bring the judgments of God on any country, they must judge for themselves. No one, I persuade myself, will expect exemption on account of his innocence. It is our happiness, that God is merciful, and does not punish as we deserve. In mercy, too, he sends judgments; because he wishes to reclaim, not to destroy. Great was his patience with the old world. He waited, after he had passed sentence on them, an hundred and twenty years, for their repentance. And, as the repentance of Nineveh saved that devoted city, and preserved it from destruction, for more than two hundred years; we have no reason to doubt, it would have saved the old world from the fatal deluge with which their impenitency was punished. The same observation will hold good, with respect to all the countries and cities which have been destroyed by national judgments. God waited long for their repentance, and made use of means which ought, in all reason, to have reformed them. But, when generation succeeded generation without any amendment, the divine vengeance at last burst upon them.

The iniquity of every one has its weight in bringing the judgments of God on the country in which he lives; a circumstance which ought to prevail

vail on all men to lead good lives. The greatest enemy, therefore, to his country is the wicked man; especially if he teach others, either by precept or example, to be wicked also. And the greatest friend to his country is the man of virtue and religion, of justice and humanity. On account of such persons God preserves the world; and were they out of it, its destruction would soon follow. "Ye are the salt of the earth,"* said the blessed Saviour to his Disciples. For as salt preserves corruptible bodies, so good men preserve a wicked and profligate world. Let Sodom and Gomorrha bear their testimony—ten righteous men would have preserved them from the devouring storm of brimstone and fire.†

The Church calls us, at this holy season,‡ to the examination of our lives, that we may see what is amiss in us—to humble ourselves before God for our errors and transgressions, and to implore his forgiveness of them—to retrench our enjoyments, that the body and mind being brought under subjection to the restraints of virtue and religion, may be the better disposed to the fear and service of God—and that, by comparing our lives with the holy law of our God, we may be led to repentance and amendment.

May God give us all this grace of true repentance; inspire us with resolution to mortify our sensual and worldly desires; confirm our good resolutions; strengthen our faith, and perfect our obedience; and, when this life is ended, receive us to his mercy, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

* Matt. v. 13. † Gen. xviii. 31. ‡ Lent.

and on all men to lead good lives. The great
 enemy, therefore, to his country is the wickedness
 especially if he teach others, either by precept or
 example to be wicked also. And the greatest friend
 to his country is the man of virtue and religion;
 of justice and humanity. On account of such per-
 sons God preserves the world; and were they not
 if it is destruction would soon follow. The ex-
 ample of the earth," said the blessed Saviour to
 the Disciples: "For as the priest was compassed
 round, to good men give a wicked and unjust
 one world. For Sodom and Gomorrah have their
 judgment—for righteous men would have been
 saved from the devastating flames of destruction and
 the Church calls us to this holy standard, to the
 imitation of our Lord, that we may be what he
 was in us—to humble ourselves before God for
 our sins and transgressions, and to forsake his
 commandments of them—to renounce our vanities,
 our pride and self-love, and rising above the
 world to the heights of virtue and religion, may
 be the better disposed to the love and service of
 God, and by comparing our lives with the life
 of our Lord, we may be led to repentance and
 amendment of our lives.
 "Thus God gives us all the grace of his Spirit
 to enable us with confidence to receive our
 spiritual wealth from his hand, and to be able to
 resist temptation and to stand firm in the
 path of duty, through the power of his Holy Spirit."

DISCOURSE XIII.

PART I.

THE FATAL EFFECTS OF OBSTINATE UNBELIEF AND IMPENITENCY.

LUKE xi. 24, 25, 26. *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: And the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

THE obscurity of this Text must be perplexing to common readers: To clear it we must attend to the preceding history and discourse.

A man under the power of the evil spirit, (who, among other distresses which he had brought on him, had deprived him of his speech) was brought to Christ, that he might by his power be delivered from his miserable condition. Christ's goodness readily interposed, freed the man from the power of the devil, and restored his speech to him. The people before whom the miracle was wrought were astonished at the event. But there were some among them of the sect of the Pharisees, who not being
able

able to deny the reality of the miraculous cure, and fearing it might make a strong impression on the spectators in favour of Christ, endeavoured to take off their attention by persuading them that he acted in conjunction with the devil, and by a power which he had received from him—That the end and design of this combination was to establish the power of the devil, by destroying the religion and Church of God among them, and reducing them to the idolatry of the Romans under whose government they then were—That to accomplish this wicked design, it was necessary to raise the reputation of Jesus, that his influence over the people might be sufficient to answer the purpose—That for this reason, Beelzebub, the head and prince of the devils had entered into a combination with him, and had given him power to cure those who were possessed, that his fame and influence might enable him to persuade the giddy multitude to follow whithersoever he should choose to lead them—“He casteth out devils,” said they, “through Beelzebub, the chief of the devils.”

This calumny our Saviour thought proper to confute; and three reasons are assigned by him to shew its folly and absurdity.

1. That every kingdom, nation, or family divided against itself must come to ruin. For if two parties act by opposite counsels, and pursue opposite ends, one must counteract and undo what is done by the other. By which means their interest will suffer, their strength will be weakened, and their power at last be brought to nothing. If this reasoning be applied to the society of devils—the kingdom of satan; and their prince be supposed to give power over them to another—to Jesus for instance—to counteract, and dispossess, and drive them out of those persons into whom they had entered; their
power

power was divided, and the weakness and ruin of their kingdom must be the consequence. So that on the very supposition which the Pharisees made, that Christ cast out devils through Beelzebub the chief of the devils; could it have been true, instead of promoting and establishing the devil's kingdom, it must have weakened and destroyed it.

2. The second reason is taken from their own practice. They had exorcists among them who did, or, who they pretended, did cast satan out of those who were possessed by him; and their success they ascribed to God. Now, why should not Christ's success in casting out devils be ascribed to God, as well as the success of their exorcists? How absurd to attribute the power of one to God, and the power of the other, though exerted at least with an equally happy issue, to the devil?

Some have doubted the fact, that the Jews had such exorcists among them; and have supposed that when Christ said, "By whom do your sons cast them out?" he referred to the seventy Disciples whom he had sent out to preach and do miracles in his name. They were *sons* in the sense in which the word is used here; that is, they were Jews by birth. On this supposition, the argument will stand thus—Those seventy persons, all Jews, *sons* of Abraham, and in covenant with God, who have been lately preaching, and casting out devils, and doing other wonderful works in your towns and villages—by whom did they cast out devils? Can you suppose they all acted in confederacy with satan, and by his power? If not; why should such a combination be imputed to me? "Therefore shall they be your judges;" and by their judgment you must be condemned, who ascribe their success to the power of God, and mine, under the same circumstances, to the power of the devil.

3. The

3. The third reason is this—That no one can rob a strong man of his goods, who is armed and watching them, unless he be first able to overcome the strong man, and to secure him. Then indeed he would have both him and his goods in his power. Christ, therefore, being able to overcome satan, and to drive him out of those who were possessed by him, must have more power than satan had, and therefore could not receive his power from satan.

This last reason is introduced and followed by most serious and weighty admonitions of the heinous guilt and impending danger of their hypocritical conduct in this matter. For it being evident that Christ did not cast out devils by any combination with satan, it must follow that he did cast them out by the power of God, and therefore the kingdom of God—the promised Messiah, who was to set up that kingdom in the world, and to beat down and destroy the kingdom of satan, was come among them. He then warns them of the danger they incurred, by opposing what he was doing to destroy the kingdom of the devil; “He that is not with me, is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth;” that is, he who does not assist me in setting up the kingdom of God, and gathering men into it; but, on the contrary, opposeth and counteracteth my endeavours, scattereth them, and driveth them away, and is fighting against the interest of God’s kingdom. Then follows the parable of the Text, “When the unclean spirit is gone,” &c. As if Christ had said to them—As for you, who see satan driven out by me from those bodies which he hath possessed, and yet take part with him against me, ascribing that superiority over him which I have by the power of God, to a combination and compact with him: Take notice of the similitude which I now address to you, and which shall in due time

time be exactly fulfilled—The unclean spirit whom ye now see subject to my power, and cast by me out of your countrymen, shall retire into the country of the idolatrous Gentiles—the barren and dry places not yet watered by the Gospel and grace of God—There he shall endeavour to get a resting place for himself to dwell in; but he shall not find it: Thither shall the Gospel pursue him; and by the preaching and miraculous powers of my Disciples he shall be driven from his temples and oracles, and from the bodies and souls of those Gentiles who shall be converted unto God. Finding none so fit to entertain him as you are, from whom he is now cast out, he shall return unto you then more hardened in sin; and shall find you like an empty house, swept, and ornamented, and ready to receive its inhabitants. Then will he enter into you with seven-fold power, take more durable possession of you than ever, make you seven times more his children than you were, and bring on you the severest judgments of God.

Dreadful prediction of the fatal effects of the obstinate unbelief and impenitency of that miserable nation! literally was it fulfilled in them! God give us grace to profit by their example; that avoiding their hardness of heart and contempt of his word, we may remain his people, and be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, through Jesus Christ.

Prepared as the Jews were, by the promises and law and predictions of God, to know and receive Messiah, the blessing of all nations, they shut their eyes and hardened their hearts against him when he appeared, ascribing those miracles which nothing but the power of God could perform, to a confederacy with satan. They were his *own* people, whom he had nursed and preserved with the tenderest care; and yet, when he in human nature came to them,

they received him not. The innocence of his life, the benevolence of his conduct, the power of his miracles, the divine nature of his discourses and instruction, the injustice of his sufferings, the meekness of his patience, the glory of his resurrection, the predictions of their prophets, the types and figures of their law, and the promises of God, all lost their effects on their obdurate hearts: For they had shut their eyes, and closed their ears, and hardened their hearts against him. By resisting the motions of God's Holy Spirit, the calls of his mercy, the threats of his judgments, which ought to have led them to repentance, they became disposed to receive the impressions of satan, and to follow his inspirations. So that, when the Gospel of Christ was by his Apostles preached to the Gentiles, and the spiritually dry and barren places were watered by the refreshing showers of divine grace, making the wilderness like Eden, and the desert like the garden of God; satan, dispossessed of his temples and oracles, and sacrificers, and worshippers, found no place to rest in, but among the abandoned Jews—Abandoned of God to the impulse of their own impenitent hearts and wicked tempers, and abandoning themselves to the perpetration of all enormities; they were, like a house empty, swept, and garnished, ready to receive him. Empty as they were of all good dispositions, swept clean of all impressions and solicitations of God's Spirit which used to woo them to repentance, and furnished with all wicked tempers and habits (fit garniture for the habitation of satan) he entered in with his whole legion and dwelt there; and their last estate was worse than the first. They first rejected, and persecuted, and crucified Christ; they persecuted and murdered his disciples and followers; they rebelled against the Roman government, contrary to their most solemn promises

promises and oaths: lastly, they massacred each other under pretence of zeal for the true religion—party fighting against party, and sect against sect, with such blood-thirsty rage as could proceed only from him who is a murderer from the beginning. The things which belonged to their peace were, by the just judgment of God, hid from their eyes, and shut out from their hearts; and shut out to that degree, that while famine with its utmost fury was raging in their city, and their walls were tottering with the strokes of the Roman engines—Nay, at the moment in which their enemies were entering through the breaches, they were murdering one another in the streets: and nothing, at last, put an end to their party rage, but the swords of the Romans which put an end to their lives. Terrible are the judgments of God—Though they linger long, they surely will come; and will come with the greater horror, the longer they are delayed. Unbelief and impenitency sharpen their edge, and give weight to their fury. In repentance and amendment alone can safety be found.

Whatever those horrid diseases may have been, which were inflicted by satan on human bodies previously to our Saviour's coming, and while he was here on earth; from him satan received such a check that he hath never since recovered his power. As Christianity spread through the world, his power over the human body declined with his oracles; and, after two centuries, was at an end. From his cruel tortures of the body we are, by the mercy and goodness of God, delivered. All glory be to his holy name for so great a blessing.

But should we turn our attention from the bodies to the minds of men, and inquire whether there be less vice and villany in the world, than there was before our Saviour came into it; no positive affirmation

tion, I fear, could be given. Good men hope there is less, and wish they could with confidence assert it. In the age which succeeded the time in which the Apostles lived, the lives of Christians seem to have been generally such as their religion required. But it has been long the complaint, that their faith and charity are waxed cold, and that they no longer walk worthy of the holy vocation with which they are called: Infomuch, that if they have not returned to the open profession and practice of heathenish idolatry, they have sunk deep into its vices, and into a general disregard of religion itself.

A general reformation of vice and wickedness can be no other way effected, than by the reformation of particular persons. With others our influence may be little, but we can take care of our own conduct, and see that the full end of Christ's coming be answered with respect to ourselves. He came to "destroy the works of the devil;" not only to deprive him of his power over the body, but more especially of his power over the soul. The design of the blessed Jesus in curing bodily sicknesses and diseases, was not barely to relieve the miserable objects from their distresses, but to shew that he was to be the health of the soul, and to deliver it from the disease of sin, as well as the body from anguish and pain. In this view, he applied to himself the prophecy of Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised; to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."* If we do justice to these expressions, we must apply them to the effects of Christ's coming, on the soul, to deliver it from the

* Luke iv. 18, 19.

the power and guilt of sin, rather than to his healing the diseases of the body. Otherwise we stop short of their full meaning, and lose the instruction intended by them.

The miracles of Christ had a language peculiar to them. They were intended to teach men, that as he cured the body, he was able also to cure the soul. They are sometimes called *signs* as well as wonders, because they pointed to something beyond the present action, and signified that as Christ had power over all nature, and goodness enough to heal the sicknesses of the body, when he saw it right and best; so he had power to heal the maladies of the soul also, to take away the guilt of sin and restore men to the favour of God, and goodness enough to do so, when he saw proper. To lead men directly to this point and to impress it strongly on them, he sometimes declared the forgiveness of sins openly, as he did to the woman who anointed his feet with perfumes: as he did also to the paralytic man who was brought to him on a bed, even before he had healed his bodily complaint; to convince us that the diseases of the soul are first to be regarded, and that his principal business was to restore soundness to the broken and contrite heart. In this instance, too, he wrought the miracle of healing the man's body, to prove that he had power to heal his soul by forgiving his sins.

So surely does the miraculous power of Jesus over the diseases of the body prove his power over the maladies of the soul also. And as he had the power, so he had the goodness to heal the heart that was broken by penitence; to give deliverance to the captives who are wearied with the slavery of satan; to restore sight to the mind which is blinded with ignorance and error; to set at liberty those who are
held

held in bondage by sin and death; to preach the year of deliverance—the great Jubilee—so acceptable to bond-men and slaves; that is, to make known the time of God's visitation, to give the knowledge of redemption and salvation to a lost and wretched world.

If this be the general design of Christ's miracles, it must be the design of those particular miracles by which the devil was driven out from those persons of whom he had taken possession. By them a sensible proof was given, that satan was subject to his power; and that as he could drive him from the bodies, so he could expel him from the souls of men. This conclusion ought to have been made by those who saw the miracles of Christ: and this conclusion we ought now to make, who believe the records of the holy Evangelists. It will lead us to put our trust in his mercy and goodness; that he will deliver us not only from the pains of sin, the work of the devil; but from the power he has over the mind to tempt us to sin, and to keep us in bondage to the lusts of the flesh, and the love of the world.

Deliver us from evil, the Holy Jesus hath taught us to pray; that is, from the *evil one*, from satan, the author of evil; that he may not have power over us, to bring diseases on our bodies, or guilt on our souls. But let us remember, that as we pray, so must we strive against the *evil one*, by resisting all temptations to sin, and by walking in all the commandments and ordinances of God. His ordinances are the appointed means of holy living, and are intended to strengthen our faith in God, and to enable us to resist the inspirations of the great enemy of God and man. Then shall we feel the power of the Redeemer, that as he hath delivered our bodies
from

from the tortures which, before his coming, the *evil one* inflicted on them; so he will, in his own good time, effectually destroy all the works of the devil in us, by delivering us from the punishment of sin, through his own most precious death; from its guilt, by his merciful forgiveness; and from its dominion, by his most Holy Spirit.

101
The first of these is the power of the will, which is the power of the soul to do as it pleases, and to resist the power of the devil. The second is the power of the intellect, which is the power of the soul to know the truth, and to distinguish between good and evil. The third is the power of the emotions, which is the power of the soul to feel the love of God, and to hate the sin of the devil. The fourth is the power of the passions, which is the power of the soul to desire the good, and to avoid the evil. The fifth is the power of the faculties, which is the power of the soul to perform the various duties of life. The sixth is the power of the virtues, which is the power of the soul to live in accordance with the law of God. The seventh is the power of the graces, which is the power of the soul to receive the help of God. The eighth is the power of the merits, which is the power of the soul to earn the reward of God. The ninth is the power of the punishments, which is the power of the soul to suffer the penalty of God. The tenth is the power of the glory, which is the power of the soul to enjoy the vision of God.

DISCOURSE XIII.

PART II.

IT having been said, that the miracles of Christ were not only wonders to establish his character as a divine person sent of God, and to give authority to what he declared; but that they were signs also, and pointed to something beyond the present action; and that one thing signified by them was, that as Christ had power over all nature, and was able to heal the diseases of the body; so he had the power to heal the maladies of the soul also, and to take away the guilt of sin; and goodness enough to do both, when he saw it proper.

A question will arise which deserves our attention; namely, whether the power of Christ, or of God, for the power is the same, be as absolute over the soul as over the body? In other words; can he expel sin and opposition to God's will, and all evil tempers and dispositions from the soul, with the same absolute power with which he cured the diseases of the body?

With regard to what God can or cannot do, we ought always to think and speak with the greatest humility, with a due sense of our own ignorance, and of the infinite perfections of the divine nature. God is almighty, that is, he can do every thing: and yet he can do nothing, the doing of which implies a contradiction in itself, or to his own holy

nature. We hesitate not to say, that God cannot make a thing *to be* and *not to be*, at the same time; or to be both true and false under the same circumstances; because, *being* and *not being*, *truth* and *falsehood* contradict and mutually destroy each other. Again; we say without scruple, that God cannot deny himself, or speak, or act falsely; because, to do so would be against the truth and holiness of his own nature. However almighty and absolute, therefore, the power of God over his creatures may be, it will always be exerted according to their nature; because their nature is his gift; and his having given a particular nature to certain creatures is an implied promise and assurance, as strong as words could make it, that he will deal with them according to that particular nature which he hath given them, and not according to another nature which belongs not to them.

If we look to the elements and material objects of the world, we shall find the power of God exerted over them according to their nature: they continue to accomplish the end, and to answer the purpose for which he designed and fitted them by the nature which he gave them. And though a miraculous interposition may be said to suspend their nature for that time and on that occasion, yet it is attended with no violence to them, because they have no will. Nor is their nature thereby destroyed, but returns again to its usual course. The body of man must be reckoned among material objects. Its natural state is health. A disease, therefore, is the absence or want of health; and the curing of a disease by a miracle is only restoring the body to its natural state by supernatural power. This does no violence to the creature, however absolutely and unconditionally it be done.

But

But with rational, intelligent creatures, the case is different. They have a *Will* of their own, given to them by their Creator; and the gift is an assurance from him, that he will treat them as creatures having such a *Will*. To this class man evidently belongs. And though his mind and will may be supposed to act from the intimate union of spirit and matter, yet they who deny liberty to his *will* speak absurdly, because *will* without *liberty* is no *will*. Now, how power over such creatures can be absolutely exerted, to change their affections and hearts against their *will*, or to change their *will*, otherwise than by motives and arguments, does not appear. To do so, would not be to deal with them according to their nature, but would reduce them from the class of intelligent beings, to that of necessary agents: their nature would be destroyed: and as their actions would not be according to their own will, but his who acts upon them, he, and not they, must be accountable for them.

From hence appears the absurd conduct of wicked people, who continuing impenitent, still trust to the mercy of God. Suppose it possible for God to extend mercy to them without acting contrary to his own nature, and the nature he hath given them; and suppose his mercy should exempt them from actual suffering for their sins; can it confer that happiness which depends on their own will and temper? The happiness of every created being must come from its Creator. That God will do every thing possible to make his creatures happy, and will confer happiness on all who are capable of enjoying it with him, there can be no reason to doubt. He hath told us, that holiness will qualify us for happiness with him; and also, that *without holiness no man shall see*, that is, be happy with him. For this reason, he hath given his Holy Spirit to be with

with us, that through his operation we may obtain that holiness which he requires. But, if a man's Will be to continue in sin and to be unholy, to remain in separation from God, and in opposition to him, it does not appear that omnipotency itself can save him. For if his Will be changed by absolute power, his nature must be destroyed, and he will cease to be accountable for his actions; because they will be no longer his. This indeed would cut off all occasion of punishment, and so it would of reward; for it would leave no room for the judgment of God. On this ground, too, God becomes the agent of every thing that is done, whether good or bad.

It appears, then, that God does not act on the human mind by force. And by attending to that Revelation of his will which he hath made, it will appear that he does act on it by persuasion; by the influence of fear, and love, and hope; and by the excitements of his Holy Spirit. In this stile, his exhortations to repentance are generally expressed. And when he speaks more absolutely, it is not that he exercises an arbitrary power over men, but to shew the necessity and certainty of his presence with them in all the works of repentance and holiness; because, being the origin and fountain of all goodness; the beginning, and progress, and perfection of holiness must be from his Spirit.

Through the whole Bible, man is considered as a reasonable creature; having ability to regard the motions of God's Spirit, or to reject them; to turn himself to them, or from them; to comply with them, or to quench them; that is, as having a Will of his own, and the power of determining his own actions; and not as being the subject of irresistible compulsion. On no other ground can we reconcile it with the goodness or justice of God, that men
should

should be left to live in error and delusion, corrupting one another, and perverting the plain doctrines of the Gospel; or in vice and villany, in opposition to the laws of God and man. For if God can, consistently with his own nature and the nature of man, change the human heart by his absolute over-ruling power, it might be done for all men, and then all men might be made *good*, whenever God pleased. In this way, error and delusion, sin and wickedness, vice and villany, and every thing that is evil in man, might be taken away. God is infinite in goodness and holiness: Why then is not this done? Because man has a *Will* of his own, and cannot be made good, or holy, or happy in opposition to it.

Let it be remarked, that our Saviour forced none of his instructions or miracles on any one; but always addressed men as beings who had an *own will*, and the power of receiving or rejecting what he taught. Preaching to the multitude, he said, "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." They all had ears to hear his words; but they all had not the will and disposition to understand and apply what he said; and they only who had, would do so. And with regard to his miracles; his general practice was, when an application was made to him, to inquire into the reason on which it was made—Whether they believed him to be able to do what they requested of him? In other words, whether they had a will and disposition to be benefited by the miracle? He sometimes told them *their faith had saved them—their faith had made them whole*. It is absurd to suppose, that their believing they were healed, or should be healed, could have wrought their cure. The power of Christ healed them; and their faith made them proper objects of his healing power. But did not Christ inquire concerning their faith, because it had a further tendency than bare health

health of body? Would it not convince them, that he who healed the body, because their faith made them capable of receiving the benefit, was able also to heal the soul of all its maladies, if they looked to him with the same stedfast faith for that divine blessing? Would it not incline the will to listen to his instructions, to believe his doctrines, and to follow his directions, and to look to him for all things necessary to the salvation of the soul, as well as to the health of the body? Can we, for instance, suppose that the Canaanitish woman, upon whose faith her daughter was relieved from diabolical possession, would ever consider Christ in any other light than as the *Son of David*, the Messiah of God, the Saviour of men? or that she would not have been disposed to believe all he said, and do all he commanded? Now, this disposition is that very state of heart which all men ought to have towards God; that very faith, to which so much is ascribed in the Bible; namely, an absolute trust and confidence in God, which believes all he says, and endeavours to do all that he commands. When the heart and will are thus disposed, the soul is prepared for the power of Christ to operate on it, and free it from all the habits and defilements of sin; even as the faith of the blind and lame, that Christ could and would heal them, made them proper objects of his miraculous power—The mercy of God forgives all their past offences, and the Holy Ghost leads and directs them in all holiness of living—Peace of conscience is their portion in this world, and the heavenly inheritance their sure reward in the world to come.

We read, that in his own country, Christ could not do many mighty works, because he was hindered by their unbelief.* Could Christ do good to the souls of those people? could he pour on them the forgiveness

* Matt. xiii. 58. Mark vi. 5.

forgiveness of God, and the blessing of the Holy Spirit, when their unbelief prevented his doing many mighty works even on their bodies? Why should not unbelief be as strong a bar in one case, as in the other? Is it easier to heal the soul than the body, that unbelief should prevent the one, and be no impediment to the other?

It has been remarked, that God deals with his creatures according to the nature he hath given them. And that Christ treated men as beings endued with reason and a will of their own, appears from his never forcing the blessing of his miracles on any one—That he healed diseases of the body, and cast out devils, when application was made to him under such qualifications as he judged to be proper ones—That his miracles were also signs; and, among other things, signified that he could heal the soul as well as the body; give life to the soul when dead in trespasses and sins, as well as life to the body when dead and laid in the grave—Particularly, that he cast out devils from those who were possessed, to shew that satan was subject to him; and that he could as surely cast him out from that heart which in faith and humility turned to him, as he could cast him out from the body; thereby to invite and induce all men to look to him, and depend on him for spiritual health and salvation. If we do so; and, with the same faith and humility give up our will to be directed by him, as they did whose bodies he healed; we shall find his power as great over the maladies of the soul as of the body—able to give health and salvation to them both. But as he forced the blessings of his miracles on no one; so neither will he force remission of sins and spiritual health on those who reject his gifts, by hardening the heart against him.

The

The Text furnishes us with another observation, respecting the danger of those who being called by God out of this wicked world, and taken into his Church, neglect to walk in that holiness of life which the Gospel requires. If we suppose the Text bears any relation to Christians; the similitude of a man who, having had satan cast out of him, courts his return, and prepares his heart to receive him, must belong to them: And the Text assures us, satan will again enter into them with seven-fold power; and that their last estate will be worse than the first. They may suppose themselves secure from this dreadful situation, because, never having had their bodies possessed by him, they come not within the description of those people from whom he hath been cast out. But if they will turn their thoughts from the body to the soul, to which point all the miracles of Christ were intended to lead them, a little reflection would convince them, that the evil tempers and dispositions of the heart are as truly the work of the devil, and as really marks of his possession, as any tortures and distortions of the body can be. Therefore it is, that we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, when by Baptism we are taken into the Church of Christ; because the works of the devil, the spirit of the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh stand in opposition to the holy nature and will of God; render us incapable of the communications of his Spirit, and of all happiness with him. To renounce these enemies of our salvation means, no longer to follow or be led by them. Now,

From the baptised person, if not in a literal, yet in a true and proper sense, satan may be said to be cast out; that is, before his Baptism he renounces and rejects the devil and his works, and promises no longer to follow his inspirations; but, on the contrary, obediently to keep God's holy will and commandments;

mandments; and to live as they direct, to the end of his life. That he may fulfil this solemn vow; his duty, the promises of God, and the blessings of his new state are recited and explained to him. He has, moreover, the benediction of God's authorised Minister, and the prayers of the Church to God for him. If, after this solemn promise made to God in the face of his Church, and his consequent admission into that Church, the animating principle of which is the Holy Spirit, the Author of all goodness; this person should turn away from the inspirations of the Spirit of holiness, to those malevolent passions and affections of the mind which are eminently called the works of the devil; what is it but to court the devil to enter again into him, and to make the heart ready to receive him? He goeth about seeking whom he may devour; and we cannot doubt but that he will readily return, and enter in and dwell there; nor can we suppose, that the power of that person in whom he dwells will be greater than it was before. The last estate of that man will be worse than the first. His wickedness will probably be greater, and his repentance attended with more difficulty.

The dreadful effects of obstinate impenitency have been set before us in the example of the Jews, who rejected all the admonitions of Christ and his Apostles. Their destruction ought to be an effectual caution to wicked Christians, and should convince them, that the same impenitency under the Gospel, will be also punished by God; if not in this world by temporal destruction, yet in the world to come, by everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.

How far God interposeth in the government of the world by inflicting judgments on particular persons, may be impossible for us to determine. With

regard to nations, we are more certain, because if they are punished by him, it must be in this world; for in this world only the national capacity subsists. But that he hath reserved the full display of his justice, as it relates to particular persons, to the next world, we have sufficient authority to say. He hath told us that he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, to whom all judgment is committed: and in consequence of his having made this judgment known to the world, he hath commanded all men every where to repent.* To persuade ourselves, that though we live in wickedness, we shall escape the judgments of God in this world, is to found our hopes on very insecure ground. Who can be sure that sickness, or accidents and misfortunes which happen to us, are not judgments from God, brought on us by our evil deeds? St. Paul told the Corinthians expressly, that it was on account of their unworthy behaviour at the Lord's table, that many were weak and sickly among them, and that many had died.† Every thing which happens to us, happens by the dispensation of God's providence; and is intended to exercise and perfect our patience and resignation to his will; or to correct us for our sins, and call us to repentance and amendment.

With regard to the general judgment at the end of the world, it does not seem possible that any person who believes the New Testament, can hope to escape the tribunal of Christ at that time; because it asserts nothing more certainly and positively than that God "hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the *world* in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained."‡ It also declares, that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in

* Acts xvii. 30, 31. † 1 Cor. xi. 30. ‡ Acts xvii. 31.

in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*

There is, therefore, no security for us but in repentance. “If we would judge ourselves,” and amend our lives, “we should not be judged.” And “when we are judged” in this world, “we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”† The judgments of God in this world are, therefore, intended to bring us to repentance, that we may be acquitted at the final judgment of God, when the wicked world shall be condemned. The longer this repentance is delayed, the more difficult will it become; because the power of the *evil one*, the lusts of the flesh, and the cares and covetous desires of the world, will become stronger, the longer they are indulged by continuance in sin.

“Take heed,” therefore, “lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God;”‡ by disregarding his declarations and threats, and continuing in obstinate impenitency to the end of your lives. Thereby your last estate will be worse than the first; and your condemnation in the day of judgment heavier than theirs, to whom the glad tidings of salvation through Christ have never been made known.

* 2 Cor. v. 10. † 1 Cor. xi. 31, 32. ‡ Heb. iii. 12.

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

...the world is a great deal of trouble...

DISCOURSE XIV.

THE PARABLE OF THE TALENTS.

MATT. XXV. 29. *To every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.*

THE Parable of the virgins, with which this chapter begins, was intended to convince Christians of the necessity of living in a constant state of preparation for the coming of their Lord either at the general judgment at the end of the world, or to call them out of the world by death; and to warn them of the danger of putting off their repentance to a late hour, lest the time of mercy should be past, and admission to the marriage feast of the lamb should be refused to them. That parable, therefore, concludes with this earnest command, “watch therefore,” and be always ready, “for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, wherein the Son of man cometh.”

To enforce this command, and fix it deeply in the mind of every Christian; that it might at all times influence his conduct, and keep him in a state of due preparation to receive his Lord; Christ immediately subjoined the parable of “a man travelling into a far country, who,” before his departure, “called his own servants” to him, “and delivered
to

to them his goods. To one, five talents; to another, two; and to another, one: To every man according to his several ability." After a long time, their Lord returned, and demanded an account of the talents he had committed to them. He who had received five talents, had improved them so well, that he produced other five which he had gained by the use of them. He also who had received two talents, produced other two which he had gained by proper management. They were both applauded by their Lord for their fidelity and diligence, were advanced in dignity and power, and were admitted into the joyful presence of their Lord. But he who had received only one talent, managed it in a very different way. He entertained an opinion as false in fact, as it was foolish in practice—that his Lord was a severe and covetous master, who would catch at every gain, however small, and punish with rigour every little loss he might incur in negotiating with his talent. Unconcerned whether his Lord's interest in his hands was increased or not, he was only careful that he might restore it to him undiminished on his return: He therefore hid it in the earth, and paid no further attention to it. Being called to his reckoning, he produced his talent, and made his apology, founding his justification on his Lord's severe temper, and hard usage of his servants, saying, "Lord, I knew that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strowed; and I was afraid, and I went and hid my talent in the earth; lo, there thou hast what is thine." That is, I knew thee to be so rigid in thy conduct, that it was impossible for thy servants to make any improvements equal to thy demands, which sometimes are so exorbitant as to require the harvest thou didst not sow. I therefore was afraid, that should any accident happen to me in negotiating

ing with thy talent, it would be imputed to my carelessness, and be charged against me. I knew also, that let my success be ever so great, I should get no credit from it. Thou wouldst consider me only as a servant who had done his duty, and to thy bounty I must have trusted for my reward. I therefore laid up thy talent in a secure place, and that thou mayest not say I have defrauded thee, here is what is thine—all I ever received of thee.

His Lord takes the case up on the principles he had avowed. Not that he admitted the justice of his representation, that he was a hard master, requiring improvements in an over proportion to the abilities he had given; but that by judging him out of his own mouth, and according to the principles on which he had acted, he might make him feel the justice as, well as severity of his sentence. "Thou wicked and slothful servant" (wicked in entertaining such unworthy notions of his Lord as led him wickedly to neglect the improvement of the talent committed to him) thou sayest that thou knowest me to be a hard man, and "that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not sowed." Thou mightest therefore have known that I expected some improvement of the talent in thy hands. Why, then, didst thou not attend to it? why not take care that I might have some increase of it? why didst thou not "put my money to the exchangers? and then, at my coming, I should have received my own with usury." His Lord then ordered the talent to be taken from him, and given to the faithful and diligent servant who had increased his five talents to ten. The Text assigns the reason of this procedure, "For to every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance; but from him that hath not, shall be taken away even that which he hath."

That

That this parable relates to the general judgment appears from the structure and issue of it. In this view of it, I shall employ the remainder of this discourse in making such remarks on it as fairly present themselves to our observation.

1. It is evident that the man going into a far country represents Jesus Christ returning to heaven after his resurrection. He is properly our Lord and Master, not only as he is God the Creator, by whom the world and all things in it were made; but also as he is the Redeemer of men, who has bought us with the price of his own blood, that we might live to him, and be his servants who paid the ransom for us.

2. The man in the parable, before his departure, called to him "his *own* servants, and delivered to them his goods," to every servant "according to his several ability." These talents they were to improve during his absence. So when Christ was about to ascend into heaven, he called his Apostles, his own servants, to him, and delivered to them his goods; that is, he committed to them his Church, to be ordered, and governed, and built up by them: Placing in it some to be apostles, some prophets, some teachers, and some private christians; dividing to every man according to his several ability; as in his infinite wisdom he saw best. According to the directions he gave, and under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost whom he promised to send to them, they were to "occupy till he came;" that is, employ their several gifts, and improve their respective talents, in calling men into his Church, and building them up in faith and holiness, till he should call them out of the world, or call the world to give account to him. For, "when he ascended up on high," even into the highest heaven, "he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."

"He

“He gave some” to be “Apostles; and some, Prophets; and some, Evangelists; and some, Pastors and Teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ.”*

3. It is plain that all the servants had power to improve the talents committed to them; for they were given according to every man’s particular ability. The slothful servant pleaded no want of ability to improve his talent; but pretended a fear that he should not do it so as to satisfy his Lord’s unreasonable expectations. Nor could there have been any justice in punishing him for not doing that which he had no ability to perform.

4. It is plain that the phrase, *be that bath*, means him who improveth what he hath to the purpose for which God gave it; and *be that bath not*, him who doth not improve the talents which God hath given to him. It will follow, that he who improves his talents shall have them increased; and increased for that reason, because he does improve them: And that he who neglects to improve the talents committed to him, shall be deprived of them in such degree as God sees to be right; and for that very reason, because he does not use them to the purpose for which God gave them.

5. It appears that the improvement or neglect of the talents given to every one, will be the rule or standard by which every one shall be judged. And that they who, having received but little, improve that little, shall be accepted as well as they who received much; and with them shall be rewarded according to the improvement they have made. For the servant who improved his two talents was admitted into the joy of his Lord, as well as he who had improved five.

VOL. I.

T t

6. It

* Eph. iv. 8, 11, 12.

6. It is evident that the final issue of this judgment will be very different to those who have, and those who have not improved their talents. The reward of the faithful servants did not end in their acquittal in the judgment to which they were called; their conduct was approved, their talents were increased, and they were admitted into the joy of their Lord. The condemnation of the wicked servant extended beyond the disapprobation of his Judge: The principles on which he had acted were condemned; he was deprived of his talent, and "cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth."

These expressions of the *joy of our Lord*, and *outer darkness*, may be supposed to be figurative, and that no precise meaning can be affixed to them. But this, granting it to be the case, can afford no security to wicked Christians. Figurative expressions mean something; and the joy of our Lord, and outer darkness cannot mean the same thing. Joy implies happiness; but darkness is uncomfortable and distressing, and by it affliction and suffering are expressed in the Scriptures. Outer darkness, or darkness which is without, imports a greater and more oppressive degree than is common; even exclusion from the happiness of heaven. That it also implies punishment, or a state of suffering, appears from the weeping and gnashing of teeth which attend it. We may, therefore, assuredly conclude, that the consequence of faithfully improving the talents committed to us by Christ our Lord, will be joy and blessedness with him. And that the consequence of neglecting or abusing them, will be grief and misery extreme. This, though we may not be able to ascertain the exact mode or degree of that joy or misery, is enough to determine the conduct of a wise and prudent man.

St. Paul hath said, "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."* And St. Peter hath told us, that "the heavens and the earth which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men."† The Prophet Daniel had this solemn judgment revealed to him—"many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame, and everlasting contempt."‡ And a greater than Daniel, Christ himself hath declared, that "the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."§ From these authorities we may fairly draw this conclusion, that in the day of judgment, the good and the wicked shall not both fare alike. The one shall be happy, the other miserable; the one shall be saved, the other lost; the one shall rise to everlasting life, the other to shame and everlasting contempt; the one shall come forth from the graves to the resurrection of life, the other to the resurrection of damnation. Suppose we cannot exactly tell what is meant by these terms, so as precisely to describe the felicity of the good, and the misery of the wicked after the day of judgment; yet, being saved and being lost, everlasting life and everlasting contempt, the resurrection of life and the resurrection of damnation, are phrases of directly opposite meaning. Immense is the difference between them; and it ought to excite us to exert every ability to escape the misery, and obtain the happiness of the world to come.

* 2 Cor. v. 10.

† Dan. xii. 2.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 7.

§ John v. 28, 29.

come. In the presence of God is fulness of joy, and at his right hand there are pleasures for ever more;* while no one can tell till he feel it, what that weight of misery is, which in outer darkness causeth weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Scriptures describe it in terms that ought to make the deepest impression on us—by the worm that dieth not, by the fire that is not quenched, by the torment that ascendeth up for ever and ever. They also inform us, that the goodness of God hath provided, and pointed out to us the certain means of escaping this dreadful state; even the mediation and atonement of Jesus Christ our Lord, who, as a man gone into a far country, is now in heaven; but who will return at the end of the world to judge the living and the dead. That he will then inquire into the use and improvement of the advantages and blessings which by his Gospel he hath conferred on us; and that our future state will be in happiness in heaven, or in misery in outer darkness, as his sentence shall determine.

Whether any better excuse can be made in the tremendous scene of the last judgment, than was made by the wicked servant, ought to be well considered by those who find any disposition in themselves to imitate his conduct. He thought, at least he said, that his Lord was a *hard man*, and required more of his servants than he had given them ability to perform: he therefore took no trouble to improve the talent committed to him. Those Christians, who suppose that Christ requires a greater degree of penitence, and faith, and humility, and charity, and holiness, and purity, than they are, under all the advantages of the Gospel, able to attain; and who, therefore, give themselves little or no trouble about the matter, ought to reflect seriously on their condition.

* Ps. xvi. 11.

condition. They are, in truth, in the very state of the wicked and slothful servant who hid his Lord's talent; and fruitless will it be for them to urge a plea, which will certainly be over-ruled by the Judge.

But the more general ground on which people, who give themselves but little concern about their Christian conversation, build their hopes, is the infinite mercy of God, and the merit of Christ's death. 'God's mercy,' say they, 'is infinite, and will be extended to all men—Christ died for all men; and, therefore, all men will be saved by his death.' Happy would it be for us, could we be content that God should be wiser than we are: It would abate our self-sufficiency, and lead us to depend more on what he says, than on our own weak reasoning. In him, justice and mercy cannot operate against each other, because there is nothing discordant in his nature. His mercy is infinite; and through his mercy he gave his Son to be the Redeemer of all men, that all men through him might be saved: and yet, we know not that he hath had mercy on the apostate angels. Christ died for all men, and yet the wicked servant was cast into outer darkness. It will be our wisdom, as it is our duty to understand God's promises as they are generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture, and not endeavour to explain them into a sense which the Scripture will not warrant. He knows best his own nature and our state, and he will do and judge that which is right. In the Scriptures, we find that the love of God gave Christ to die for the redemption of the world—that he founded a society in the world, called his Kingdom, or Church, or Body—that he sent his Apostles to call men out of the world into this Church, appointing Baptism as the sacrament of admission; and requiring repentance from sin, and faith
in

in him as the Saviour of sinners, to qualify them for Baptism—that he is now gone into heaven, to appear in the presence of God, and to intercede for his Church, as its great High Priest; to receive his mediatorial kingdom and govern it, as its King; and to instruct and direct it by his Holy Spirit, as its Prophet—that he hath his officers and servants in his Church; not only to invite and admit men into it, but to govern and direct it according to the laws and rules he hath given—that he requires all men to whom his Gospel is preached, to come into his Church as the ark of their salvation; and to live godly, righteously, and soberly in it; renouncing and abstaining from all the defilements of the world, the flesh, and the devil; to keep up their faith in him, by believing and doing all that he hath taught and commanded; and their union with him, by preserving the unity of his Church, and complying with all the ordinances and institutions of it—and that he will come again at the last day, in his glorious Majesty, to take account of the conduct of its members, when they, who shall be approved of by him, shall be admitted into his heavenly kingdom; but the wicked and unfaithful shall be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Be this our faith, and let our conversation be according to it.

7. From the view we have taken of this Parable, it appears to relate particularly to the final judgment of the Christian Church, as it stands distinguished from the world.

To set this matter in a fair light, I shall mention two or three considerations, taken from the Parable and other places of Scripture.

Let it then be recollected, that the man travelling into a far country, called to him his *own* servants
 τῶς ἰδίοις δούλοις—those who were properly and peculiarly

ly so; and to them delivered his goods—*τὰ ὑπαρχοντα αὐτοῦ*—his substance, that which was his own property. As by this man must be meant our Lord Jesus Christ, going to heaven after his personal ministry on earth was finished;* so by his own servants must be meant his apostles and disciples, including all those who should become so, to the end of the world. These are his *own* proper servants, as distinguished from the rest of the world. To them he delivered his goods, the things which belonged to him; namely, his Gospel of peace and reconciliation with God; together with all the blessings, privileges, and advantages which belong to it. These were his own; he had earned and purchased them: And they are represented in the parable by talents, or sums of money, delivered to his disciples and followers, that they might occupy and improve them till he returned. Their improvement of their talents, or the increase they gained, signifies their compliance with the call and conditions of the Gospel, and their fulfilling the duties it requires of them according to their several stations.

In this description they must all be included to whom the Gospel is fairly preached, though many of them may refuse to accept it: Because the offer of the Gospel is a talent of which they, to whom it is made, must give an account; and consequently they shall be judged by the Gospel which they unreasonably rejected. Among these, the Jews must be reckoned, who obstinately and wickedly resisted all the calls to repentance and acknowledgment of the truth, which were made to them by Christ and his Apostles, and by the Christian Church, from their time to ours. Theirs was the favour of God's
former

* There is no Greek for the words, *the kingdom of heaven*, in the 14th verse; but they were inserted by the translators. The rendering would have been full as just, *For I am as a man*, &c.

former dispensation; a talent of great price, and which ought to have been better improved, and to have led them to Messiah, to whom their law and prophets clearly pointed.

Others there are, who directly imitate the conduct of the Jews. They reject the mediation and atonement of Christ, though fairly preached and offered to them. Nor will they enter into his Church, nor receive his laws. And as the Jews reject Christ that they may retain the law of Moses, and expect to obtain justification by it; these people retire from the light and salvation of the Gospel, to the dark and cold prospects of the religion of nature, on which they depend for justification with God.

Others, though they apparently receive the Gospel, wickedly hide the talent in the earth, and make no improvement of it. They call themselves Christians, but bring not forth the good fruits which the Gospel requires, and is calculated to produce; consequently they can make no increase in holiness, nor in any Christian graces and tempers.

All these, when Christ shall descend from heaven to reckon with his servants concerning the talents committed to them—the blessings and advantages of the Gospel dispensation—shall be judged by him according to the law of the Gospel. Let all, therefore, who are concerned in the process of that judgment, seriously and in time attend to it.

And, that the design of the parable of the talents is to describe, and lay before us the process of the judgment of the Christian Church by Jesus Christ at the last day, is rendered highly probable by what St. Paul hath said; namely, that “as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish,” that is, be condemned, “without law.” Where, *without law*, must mean, without the *written*, or *revealed* law of God. It cannot mean, without law *absolutely*, be-
cause

cause *sin is the transgression of the law*; and where there is *no law*, there can be *no transgression*, nor any room for judgment or condemnation. Further, he saith, "As many as have sinned in," or under "the law," that is, of revelation, "shall be judged by the law" of revelation under which the providence of God placed them.* And by his reasoning on this subject, he hath led us to conclude, that the Gentiles who have not the revealed law of God for the rule of their conduct, shall not be judged by it, but by the law of conscience under which God's providence hath left them. If, therefore, they who have the revealed law of God made known to them, shall be judged by it; and they who are left under the law of conscience, shall be judged by it, and by the law of that reasonable nature which God hath given them, we have reason to conclude, that the process of judgment by laws so different, must be as different as the laws are by which it is conducted.

The same consequence will follow from what our Saviour hath declared; namely, "That servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes: But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes."† Here, *knowing his master's will*, must mean his having the benefit of divine revelation for the rule of his conduct; because he is supposed to have a superior degree of knowledge, and a plainer law to direct him, than he who knew not his Lord's will: otherwise he could not have deserved to have been beaten with more stripes, that is, to have been more severely punished. And not to *know his Lord's will*, must mean, the not having the advantage of divine revelation for the rule of his conduct, but being left to the law of conscience and

Vol. I.

U u

natural

* Rom. ii. 12.

† Luke xii. 47; 48.

natural reason; because, without the advantage of reason and conscience, he could not have distinguished between those things which were, and which were not worthy of punishment;* and, consequently, could not have been subject either to judgment or condemnation.

The reason of this distinction is that universal maxim adduced by our Saviour on this occasion; "Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required"—A maxim of such acknowledged justice, that "to whom *men* have committed much, of him they will ask the more." Happy would it be for them, did the plain meaning of this maxim always regulate their conduct: But it sometimes happens, that the maxim is pleaded, though its meaning is neglected. The right which every man claims, of choosing his own mode of religion, is sometimes carried so far, that he will renounce Christianity and become a votary of the religion of nature, or deism, with as little ceremony as he would abandon one society of Christian Professors, and join another. As he considers himself no longer under any obligation to believe the doctrines, and practise the duties of the Gospel, he supposes God will regard the matter as he does; and will judge him, if he judge him at all, by the law of nature, and not by the law of the Gospel, because he did not live by it. And if it be true, that much will be required of him to whom much is given; it must also be true, that little will be required of him to whom little is given. A man, too, will be accepted according to what he hath, and not according to what he hath not.

That these maxims are true, will be denied by no one: but in this case they are misapplied. God did

not

* See a Sermon of Bishop Sherlock's on this subject, vol. ii. discourse vi.

not place this man under the religion of nature, but under the revelation of the Gospel. His choosing the religion of nature in preference to the Gospel, was his own act, for which he is accountable to God, as well as for his rejecting the Gospel. And by the Gospel he must be judged, whether he receive it or not. It is a talent which has been committed to him, and of it he must give an account. With regard to the religion of nature, or the law of reason and conscience, it must be the rule of a man's conduct where God hath given no positive revelation of his will: but where he hath, both reason and conscience require submission to it; because it will be the standard of the final judgment of God with respect to those to whom it is given.

That we are born in a Christian country, and have early opportunities of being informed of the blessings of our holy religion—of being instructed in its principles, and in those things which it requires of us, ought to be the subject of our devout thanksgiving to our heavenly Father. It displays to us the greatness of God's love, and the means of obtaining his favour, both in this world and in the next, far beyond the utmost stretch of reason and conscience. It also makes known to us the wrath of God against those who reject the Gospel; or who, declining from that holy conversation which it requires, live wickedly, and die without repentance.

If, then, Christians are to be judged by a different process, founded on a different law from that by which they shall be judged who never heard of the Gospel—if the blessings and advantages of our holy religion are so many talents committed to us by God, of the improvement of which we must give him an exact account in the day of judgment, and receive our sentence according as our life hath been,
comparing

comparing it with the law of the Gospel; we ought to reflect on our situation, while we have time to correct what is amiss in it; remembering, that the laws of that holy religion by which we are now required to live, will be the rule by which we shall be finally judged.

You may think lightly of these things at present, and explain them away by critical interpretation of Scripture, and philosophical arguments, both falsely so called. Explain them as you can, and reason about them as you will, their final issue will be awful beyond your utmost conception. Worldly cares, and pleasures, and business may engross your attention, and leave you neither time nor inclination to regard matters which appear to you to be very remote. But every thing in this world passeth quickly away and is gone. After a little time, sickness, or old age will bring eternity near, and place it before you—A little longer, and death will put you in actual possession of it. When that tremendous scene shall take place, should your lamps be gone out, for want of that holy conversation which the Gospel requires, you will, at the day of judgment, be in the same condition with the foolish virgins who were excluded from the marriage feast, and left in outer darkness.

DISCOURSE XV.

THE GENERAL JUDGMENT.

MATT. XXV. 31, 32. *When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory. And before him shall be gathered all nations; and he shall separate them, one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats.*

IN discoursing on the Parable of the Talents, I endeavoured to shew, that it described the process of the last judgment as it related to Christ's *own*, or peculiar servants; those, namely, to whom the will of God had been made known by the promulgation of the Gospel; with a view to impress strongly upon them, the necessity of that constant state of preparation for the coming of their Lord, which was enjoined in the parable of the ten virgins, which concluded with this emphatical command, "Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day, nor the hour, when the Son of man cometh."

To impress this important lesson still more deeply on their minds; by displaying the justice and severity of God against obstinate sinners of every description, and his mercy and goodness to those who had lived according to the laws which he had given them for the rule of their conduct, Christ proceeds to describe the awful scene of the last judgment at the end of
the

the world, as it will affect the other inhabitants of the earth, to whom the Gospel of salvation through him had never been made known. Of this representation, the Text is the introduction: It describes the Son of man, to whom the Father hath committed all judgment, descending from heaven, clothed with glory, and attended by all the holy angels: Being seated on the throne of his glory, all nations are convened before him: His piercing eye discovers the secrets of all hearts; and he separates the *good* from the *evil*, as a shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats, when he penneth his flocks for the night: The former he placeth on his right hand; the latter on his left.

Several circumstances in this description demand our attention; and, in the consideration of them, fresh proof will arise, to shew, that as this account of the general judgment relates to the world, in contradistinction to the Church of Christ; so the Parable of the talents relates to the final judgment of the members of that Church.

There is a remarkable difference between the terms by which the persons are mentioned who are to undergo this judgment, and those terms which are used in the Parable of the talents. In the one case, they were called their Lord's *own* servants; but these are denominated the *nations*. The Greek word, *ἔθνος*, occurs many times in the New Testament, and much oftener in the Septuagint. It is in our Bible sometimes translated by the word Nations; sometimes, by the word Gentiles; and sometimes, by the word Heathen; and is used by the inspired Writers to distinguish the other inhabitants of the world from the covenanted people, or Church of God. Neither Jews, nor Christians are ever called by either of those names. While the Jewish Church continued, the Jews were God's *own* peculiar

liar servants: the other tribes of the world were the nations, the Gentiles, the Heathen. The Jewish Church and Œconomy being ended, and the Christian Church and Œconomy having succeeded in its place; Christians are now what the Jews formerly were, the covenanted people of God. And though the Christian Church is made up of all nations, and kingdoms, and people; yet, as a Church, it is *peculium Dei*—God's own property, as the Jewish Church once was: and its members are no longer gentiles, or heathen, or nations of the world, but Christ's *own* proper servants; to whom he hath committed his talents, his good things, the peculiar blessings and privileges of his Church. To this Church his promises are made; to it his Holy Spirit is given: As its Head and King, he governs it; as its Priest, he made atonement, and now makes intercession for it; and, as its Prophet, he teaches and instructs it. But the tribes and families of the earth are the nations of the world, the gentiles, the heathen; and by these means, as well as in fact, are distinguished from the Church, the *peculium* of Christ. In this sense is the word *ἔθνος*, *Gentile*, used by the old Christian writers, to distinguish the idolatrous nations from the Christian Church. And the word *ethnic*, being the Greek word *ἔθνος*, with the English termination, is frequently used by the old English writers, to signify the heathen nations or people; and the word is to be found in our modern dictionaries, explained in that sense.

These observations confirm what I have before observed, that Christ's *own* servants—the Christian Church, and all to whom the Gospel hath been made known—shall be judged by the process described in the Parable of the talents; the law of the Gospel being the rule of that judgment. And the nations, the gentiles, the heathen, they to whom the Gospel
hath

hath not been made known, shall be judged according to the process now under consideration; and the law of reason and conscience shall be the standard of their trial.

Another circumstance of which we ought to take notice, is the separation which the judge makes of the good from the evil. His conduct is illustrated by that of a shepherd, who, when he driveth his flock to the fold for the night, separateth the sheep from the goats, putting each kind into a different pen; because, though they may feed quietly in a large range; yet, crowded in a fold, the goats would be prejudicial to the sheep: The Judge, therefore, separateth the good from the evil; because, though, like the wheat and the tares in the same field, they may live together without more annoyance to the good, than may be necessary to exercise their faith and patience, and perfect their graces and virtues, yet, when they come to be penned for eternity, it is necessary a separation should be made. The good and the wicked can have no complacency in each other; and nothing unclean and unholy can enter into the kingdom of heaven. The shepherd, by his knowledge of the external appearance, easily maketh a true distinction between the sheep and the goats; and the Judge of the world, by his intuitive knowledge of the hearts of men, will make a true and exact distinction between the good and wicked: and he will set the good on his right hand, and the wicked on his left hand.

To see the force of this circumstance, it will be necessary to advert to the practice of the Jewish courts in capital causes. When the Judges had heard the accusation against the prisoner, and the evidence by which it was supported, and also his defence, he was removed from the court, till they had considered all circumstances for and against him,
and

and had settled the judgment they would give. The criminal was then brought into the court, for the last time. If the judgment of the court was favourable and acquitted him, he was placed on the right hand of his judges; but if he was to receive the sentence of condemnation, he was set on their left hand.

Every thing being thus prepared—the parties arranged according to their real condition—heaven and earth, angels and men being the spectators of the equitable and righteous conduct of the Judge, he proceeds to the sentence. For here, there will be no need of other evidence: Every man's own conscience will attest the justice of the doom pronounced. But that they on the left hand may have an opportunity of pleading in their own vindication, and of urging every circumstance in mitigation of their punishment, or to shew why the judgment should not be executed on them; the ground of the sentence will be assigned when the sentence shall be pronounced. And,

First; To the good and virtuous among the Gentiles, the gracious Judge will turn his placid countenance; and, extending wide the arms of his mercy, will open his life-giving lips, and pronounce their acquittal in these joyful words, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick, and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me." These are all works of mercy and humanity; such as nature, reason, and conscience teach and require; and such as God, the author of nature, reason, and conscience, demands and will accept.

Our Saviour taught the multitude to whom he preached,* to do good to their enemies, to those who hated and did evil to them; to lend, hoping for no reward; not to judge, and condemn, but to forgive what was done against them; and promised that their reward should be great—that God would forgive their offences against him; and also, that their imitation of God in the works of mercy and love, would make them his children, who is kind and good to all, even to the unthankful, and to the evil; causing his sun to rise, and his rain to descend on the whole world, that all its inhabitants may enjoy the benefit of them. Upon the same principles is the process of the general judgment conducted. Works of goodness and mercy, in which alone our imitation of God can consist, are the only ones required of those Gentiles to whom the Gospel of Christ had not been made known. For though natural ability, reason, conscience, may, in a large sense, be justly considered as talents from our Creator, and lay an obligation on us to use them to the purposes for which they are given; yet they are never distinguished as talents in Holy Scripture, because being common to all men, they make no discrimination between one man and another, except in degree. Seeing, therefore, all men possess them, no account is demanded of them as particular endowments or advantages; only their improvement, as it shews itself in the tempers and works of humanity and mercy, is brought into view by their Judge.

How gracious is God! How holy in all his ways and righteous in all his works! To these Gentiles he had given but little, compared with the blessings and advantages conferred on his Church; and of them but little is required. He will accept them

* Matt. v. 44, &c. Luke vi. 35, &c.

them according to what they had, and will not require of them what they had not. To them the will of their master, the Gospel of Christ, had never been published; they, therefore, are not to be judged by the law of the Gospel, but by the law of that reasonable nature which is the common gift of God to all men. By this law the duties of humanity, and mercy, and love, are enjoined; and from it may be clearly deduced by that reason and conscience which are the only foundation of virtue and morality. And wherever their works appear, they will find the favour and acceptance of God, through the atonement and intercession of him who died for the sins of the world.

In the acquittal and acceptance of these good and virtuous Gentiles, we see an instance of the efficacy of the mediation of Christ—that it does in truth and reality extend to the whole world, from the promise of a Saviour to Adam, to its final period—even to those who have known nothing of him. For, in the humble reply which they make to the Judge, they disclaim all knowledge of him, or of having ever administered to him: “When saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?” This declaration might be truly made by them, to whom the Gospel of Christ had never been preached. But it could not be truly made by Christians to whom it is preached constantly; and who have in their hands the Holy Books which make known the glad tidings of his salvation. In these Books, they are told, that a cup of cold water given to a disciple of Christ for his sake, shall not lose its reward; and that he who receiveth Christ’s disciples, receiveth him. These instances, together with this process

process of the general judgment of which we are now treating, would let them fully into the meaning of administering to Christ's necessities, and would have effectually prevented the reply which they made. This is another argument that the description of the general judgment here given us by our Saviour, relates to the Gentile world, and not to the Christian Church.

But hear the answer of their merciful Judge—"Inasmuch as ye have done this unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me." Though God be the King and Judge of all the earth; and, as their Creator, stands equally related to all men; yet the poor, and the wretched, and the friendless, and the oppressed, have ever been the more peculiar objects of his regard. He hath declared that he will be their *friend*, and will reward those who are kind to them, and severely punish those who injure them. And, as they partake so deeply in that poverty and want, and oppression which their Judge endured, when, clothed in mortal flesh, he sojourned among men, he is graciously pleased to call them his *brethren*, and to consider the mercy and compassion shewn to them, as shewn to himself. From hence let us draw a lesson of instruction—Christ is not now bodily present with us: We cannot administer to the relief of distresses which he no longer endures. But the poor and needy are always with us—the distressed are ever within our reach, and when we will, we can be kind to them: They are his brethren—the sharers in his poverty and affliction—he hath commanded us to assist them; and he hath declared that he will accept the good deeds done to them, as though they had been done to him.

But who can express—who can conceive the condemnation of the wicked, during this awful and majestic

jestic scene? Their station on the left hand hath indeed prepared them to expect the sentence of condemnation: But they know not the weight of their doom, till the voice of the Judge, more dreadful than thunder, breaks upon them with, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Terrible doom of most just judgment! God preserve us all, by his grace and Holy Spirit, in the true faith of his Gospel, and in all holiness and righteousness of life, that we may, through Christ's merit, escape that wrath which shall overwhelm the wicked heathen, in the day of his fierce indignation! The reason of their sentence is immediately assigned, "I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me not in; naked, and ye clothed me not; sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not."

What can these miserable ones alledge in their vindication? or what plea can they urge, why the dreadful sentence should not be fully executed on them? The only reply they could make was, "Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister to thee?" That is, Had we ever seen thee in any circumstances of distress, we should most readily have given all the relief in our power. This plea was not truly alledged, and, therefore, it could not be admitted: "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these," replies the Judge, "ye did it not to me"—You have not relieved the necessities of your fellow men who have been ever with you, suffering hunger, and thirst, and cold, and sickness, and imprisonment: In refusing to relieve them, you have refused to relieve me; for had I been in their state, I should have found the same neglect from you. Their sentence must therefore
take

take place, and “these shall go away into everlasting punishment.”

It hath been observed, that the imitation of God, in the tempers and works of mercy and love, will make us his children, the heirs of his promises and of his heavenly kingdom. The issue of the general judgment ought to convince every man, that a deficiency of mercy and good-will to the poor and helpless, much more the oppressing and injuring of them by direct acts of injustice and malevolence, will make us the children of him who is the enemy of all goodness—“Depart from me, ye cursed,” said the Judge of the world, “into everlasting fire, prepared,” not originally for man, but “for the devil and his angels;” and then only to become the portion of men, when, by imitating his tempers, they have worked themselves up into his likeness.

The issue of the general judgment ought to convince you of the high estimation in which the tempers and works of love and mercy are held by Almighty God. The heathen, who had practised them on the true principles of disinterested benevolence, and had thereby formed the heart to habits of doing good offices to all who needed them, shall be acknowledged by the Judge of the world, as the blessed children of his Father, and received into his heavenly kingdom, in which the basis of happiness is *love*. These virtues rise not from Divine Revelation, though they are commanded by it, and their obligation enforced by the positive authority of God, who hath bound Christians to the practice of them by awful threats and precious promises: But they spring from the common reason and conscience of men, and the relation in which they stand to each other: therefore are they made the standard of the final trial of the Gentile world, Christians shall be judged

judged by another rule—the law of the Gospel, and according to the improvement they have made of the privileges and blessings of that revelation of his will, which God hath made to them by his Son. But this revelation takes not off the obligation of reason and conscience, which are the gift of God to them in common with the rest of the world. They are, therefore, on the common principles of nature, equally bound to the practice of the duties of love and mercy with the Gentiles. These duties are moreover enjoined on them by the authority of Divine Revelation. Their deficiency in the practice of them will therefore be attended with the highest aggravation; since it will be an offence against the law of reason and conscience, and against the positive authority of the revelation of God. And,

If so heavy a doom, as you have seen, will fall on those whom the providence of God hath left to the light of nature, the voice of reason, and the admonitions of conscience, because they neglect to live according to them; how can Christians expect to escape, who (besides the light of nature, the voice of reason, and the dictates of conscience which they have in common with others) have also the revelation of the Gospel superadded, which makes known to them the will of their Lord; how can they expect to escape, if they behave unworthily of the high distinction which the goodness of their heavenly Father hath conferred on them? These things demand your serious attention; because your situation requires an exact compliance with that new law of life, which God hath given you by his Son. To you the word of his salvation is sent. If you refuse, or neglect to live by it, you do it at your peril. For know assuredly that you shall be judged by it. And if you neglect, with the evil world, the works of goodness and mercy which your reason
and

and conscience point out to you; or, with the wicked servant, hide the talents committed to your trust; you shall be condemned with them, by your Lord and Master, when he shall come in his glorious majesty to reckon with you; and to judge the nations of the earth.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

8 JA 86